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Leading dermatologist says skin needs to bleed in order to heal

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Esperat identifies her killers in letter she left behind

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Cop who died in Bicutan jail siege buried a hero in Ilocos Sur

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Rescuers work through 700 aftershocks in Nias, Indonesia

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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PDI Reader's Advocate named SEC commissioner

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MALAPITAN

'Lipo' fat can be used to sex up private parts

By Marinar D. Talosa

BY LAND AND SEA, the Philippine National Police intensifies security measures for the 1,500 foreign delegates to the 113th Inter-Parliamentary Union general assembly. A police motorcycle escort patrols (right) the bay area around the Philippine International Convention Center, the venue of the six-day meeting starting April 3. The Coast Guard is on full alert around beach fronting Manila Bay where most of the delegates are billeted.

Now, it's Noli vs Loren

SC hopes to finish recount this year

By Armand Nocum

"A GOOD CATCH," President Arroyo cups of Forces Z) Ajon, a suspected international terrorist presented to her by Chief Supt. Vidal Quevedo and Southern chief of Gen. Alberto Braganza in Zamboanga City on Thursday. Al Kamah said who reportedly carries a Palestinian passport. Ajon was arrested on March 26 at the Zamboanga International Airport by combined police, military and immigration operatives.

15,000 cops dedicated to secure IPU meet

By Luige A. del Puerto

GMA willing to pay political cost

With VAT on menu, Palace wines, dines some solons

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

Honesty normal thing to do for 2 Naia janitors

By Hilda Dizon

PLUGGED

Pope's 'living will' wants life support to the end

POPE JOHN PAUL II

TERRI SCHIAVO

UNPLUGGED

US Supreme Court rejects appeals by Schiavo's parents

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Esperat knew her killers

By Armando N. Nonoy

EVEN the nervelessness journalist, slain columnist Marlene Esperat had made sure to leave behind in a letter the identity of the persons who wanted her dead and even how much her killer was paid to do the job.

In an interview with lawyers to remember in Manila yesterday, a relative of Esperat said that apart from detailing the letter, the Gonzales—who was killed in General Santos City last week—had been telling close friends and friends about her killer two weeks before her assassination.

"One day, she went to me and announced that a killer had already been hired to finish her off," said the relative, who asked not to be named for fear of her safety.

According to the relative, she advised Esperat to be low and stop hitting the corporations in the 15 cases she had filed against numerous national and local officials in the last 10 years.

"Perhaps for (Tita), a mere, you're too young to die," the relative said she told Esperat.

The columnist refused, however, to show the letter to this reporter.

"I will just tell you where they finally got the last culprit," the relative said, adding that she believed the members of the Lanao Province Esperat ever known to have enemies and allies within the intelligence community.

The relative said she believed Esperat was killed to "silence her" and stop her from pursuing the cases she had filed in the Office of the Ombudsman. She said Esperat had done a very good job—it gathering evidence that could stand in court even if she murdered.

"There were before she died, she went to see Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez and Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to follow up on the cases related to alleged irregularities in the Department of Agriculture," the relative said.

The investigation into the murder of Esperat will include "everything" said "everyone," and would not be limited to the enemies in General Mendoza, Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao covered yesterday.

At the same time, Lomibao ordered Supt. Willie Bolgado, the police chief of General Santos City, who has been linked to Esperat's killing.

Mr. interviews to Tata Boys (Esperat's sons) are not to leave any stone unturned, which means all angles, all motives, all matters pertaining to the killing will be investigated," Lomibao said.

Lomibao was responding to an incident report that had said in Esperat's relatives wanted the scope of the investigation widened to include personalities in the government.

Lomibao said that even before the killing of Esperat, he had already ordered the creation of a special investigation task force to look into the killing of Esperat.

In an earlier interview, Esperat's son Jonjon said he had nothing to do with Esperat's killing.

"I am bothered by the statement of a certain George Esperat implicating I had to do the killing of his wife," he said. "The last time Esperat and I were not on the same. Maybe it is her husband who should be investigated."

Based on final filed a case of obstruction of justice against Esperat when the latter was Tacurong City police chief. The case is pending with the Ombudsman in Mindanao.

Also in General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat Gov. Bai Mangudadatu offered a P200,000 reward to anybody who could provide information that would help solve the killing of Esperat.

"Nakakaawa ng mangyari ng kanya sa ating pamayanan. Dahilang kabang journalists ng ang pinatay ako. Kailangang mahuli ang may kinalaman (The killings are ruining our province's image. Two women journalists have been killed here. They must be given justice)," Mangudadatu told the Inquirer.

Late last year, Jerry Gorgon, a former reporter of a Koronadal City based radio station was shot and killed by a gunman who was never caught. Gorgon had just resigned from his radio station to become a media consultant at the time of his death. —With Lenge A. del Rosario in Manila and Agustin F. Zenith, PDI Mindanao Bureau

It's final: Gov't to lose 1 of 5 SMC board seats

By Doris C. Dumlao, Elizabeth Sanchez and Nicole Pigo

THE GOVERNMENT abandoned a last-ditch attempt to take control of 11 general seats in San Miguel Corp. today and exchange gain's stock rights with Japan's Kirin Brewery.

According to industry sources, the government, or the San consortium, considered tapping into the state-run pension funds to cover the additional P2.4 billion needed for the Presidential Commission on Good Government to keep its 27 percent stake in SMC from being diluted.

At the end of the stock offer period, the PCGG was able to muster only around P1.1 billion in capital subscriptions, said PCGG Commissioner Florentino Tiong.

As a result, the government now has four seats, from the previous five, although the PCGG said this was not because of the P200,000,000 shares.

Officials of the Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System, as expected to invest in ownership, said they would shell out money only to pay for their own shares and not to fund any additional subscriptions on behalf of government.

Another leading investor said the government did not pursue any more an arrangement with the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines which earlier offered to fund whatever was needed to maintain the government's stake at SMC.

A DBP official said the previous board would subscribe to additional shares of SMC up to the number of shares it was allowed to keep in a 20-percent stake.

The DBP and SSS own a combined 1.6 percent stake in the food and beverage giant on top of the 27 percent held by the PCGG.

GSIS itself paid only P900 million to keep its stake but it has other affiliates, such as provident fund, which own additional shares.

DBP president Cesar de la Paz said "we only paid for our shares."

"We're having shares we believe are worth somewhere near market value or present holdings. I am not privy to what other government agencies did. So we came to an in-house decision for the SMC shares," De la Paz said.

A Kirin executive could not be further reached while GSIS take up the shares that the PCGG could not afford to pay.

The PCGG needed P4.5 billion to keep the 27 percent stake in SMC and was able only P1.1 billion using cash dividends from the government-held Philippine Investment Fund.

Officials said the partial subscription was enough, according to PCGG commissioner. "Our objective, as long as the government holds more than 20 percent of SMC shares, is a valid will have the veto power."

Isafp tags media groups as 'enemies'

By Norman Bordadora

MILITARY intelligence has tagged a couple of journalists' groups as among the communists' enemies in a video being shown in the countryside to an estimated 10 million over the past year, an official of one of the groups said yesterday.

Inday Espina-Varona, chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, said a public forum on government operations that "just plain backwards," we got told of a video put out by the Inday Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. What was a part there titled "Know Your Enemies."

Named in that part of the video were the NUJP and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Varona said.

"The revelation comes at a time the Philippines has been tagged the most place to be a practicing journalist outside of war-torn Iraq.

Eleven of the said journalists' orders also followed the military's tactic of red-tagging journalists if they criticized government policies or activities of the government or its agencies.

"The NUJP is, well, considered as critical of the government. The PCIJ was included, perhaps because of its stories in 'Get Real,' coming out with...stories that are also perceived to be critical of the government," Varona told the business in the television interview.

Varona said the NUJP was planning to invite both houses of Congress to request an investigation into the alleged military video.

"We've been told the video is being shown to communities in the countryside. We know it's a horrible lie that farmers and people of the people," she said.

SPORTS

PUREFOODS import Antonio Smith gets by-passed by the Shoe's power duo of Rural Ednilod (left) and Eric Pinoli (right).

SMB eyes lead vs Shell

By James Todd

EDMID Jao Aurelio is very much concerned about Shell's starting power following an energy-sapping encounter against Coca-Cola the other day.

That's because the Turbochargers will clash with the well-rested San Miguel Beermen today in the 2005 Great Midnight Pilipinas Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I hope we could still come out strong after that Coca-Cola game," said Aurelio of the Turbochargers' tough conquest of the Tigers Wednesday for the team's third victory in five games, a full game behind frontrunners San Miguel Beer and Purefoods.

"We're expecting a high energy level from [ex-Migue] since it is coming off a long break," Aurelio added.

The Beermen (4-1) survived a double-overtime clash against the Sta. Lucia Realtors and dislodged erstwhile leader Talk 'N' Text before going into virtually holiday vacation.

"The toughness gave us lessons to avoid such on our games," said last Migue Beer coach Jong Uichico, who will face Aurelio in 4:40 p.m.

Meanwhile, Sahlaine Brown will probably play his last game for Sta. Lucia at 7:30 p.m. when this Realtors tie tries to stave off their opponent Red Bull Barako.

The Realtors are at the bottom of the standings with a 1-4 record while Gin Kings (2-2) are tied with the Bolts, Express and the Barangay Ginebra Kings.

Brown, who is returning to all-time will be replaced by former Ginebra import Ryan Fletcher.

Aurelio is looking forward to another outstanding performance from Atlanta-bit Parker Wilson, who set a counterpoint-high 46 points and plucked down 16 rebounds against the Tigers.

"He (Wilson) knows that if he wants to stay, he must perform," said Aurelio. "After what he showed, I am recommend to re-replace him."

Wilson's fiery showing also offset Indy-tabbed off on the rest of the Turbochargers as Rich Alvarez, Tom Delos Cena, Ronnel Ednid, Roger Yap and Billy Mamaril blended superbly with their import.

Jimmy Alapag is still a doubtful starter for 2004 after Coolcat removed from cause on his left foot and Danny Seigle, Glenn Rondez, Kelly Nonoy, Gonzales, Rommel Adducul and import Chris Haugen will have to step up again for the Beermen.

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Jaime Alvarez

Cuban coach returning to polish local fighters

THE AMATEUR boxing association of the Philippines got a much-needed shot in the arm when the Cuban Sports Ministry or Coludeportes Assembly put in the go-signal for Cuban national coach Raul Fernandez Limpere to return to the Philippines and select local coaches in training the national pool of boxers.

The was found yesterday by Cuban Ambassador Jorge Ruy Jimenez and Alfag president Wilmer T. Lopez who, actually at last year's Athens Olympics, for three years starting with the Cuban government for the services of games.

"The return of Raul will be a big boost to our preparations for the coming Southeast Asian games which the country will host in November," said Lopez. "And with him around, we could also augment our ongoing program for the 2006 Qatar Asian Games and the 2008 Olympics in Beijing."

Limpere, whose Cuban coach—heavyweight Odlanier Solis Fonter and light flyweight Mustaches Yordi—bagged the gold medals in the Athens Games, has had more with the national pool in 1995-96 and 1999-2000.

Lopez and Limpere breakfasted with the Manny pugs and the locals' breakfast to with him will be the main ingredient in forming a pool of fours.

Limpere was instrumental in helping Mustaches "Mayor" Velasco win a silver medal in the Athens Olympics.

Lopez said that on Sept. 17 last year he acquired the Philippine Sports Commission and Cuban Boxing Federation for a Cuban translator and that the ring proposal was approved by then PSC chair Ricardo Robredo.

Former DAR chief suspended for graft

OMBUDSMAN Simeon Marcelo has placed under a six-month preventive suspension former agrarian reform acting secretary Jose Mari Ponce who is under preliminary investigation for allegedly gotten wealth.

Ombudsman Investigators said Ponce, who is now chief executive officer of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority, had supposedly wealth beyond his and his wife's lawful means when he was still with the Department of Agrarian Reform.

They said Ponce had remained the real owner of his assets in the statement of assets and liabilities that he had filed.

"This constituted sufficient basis for the Ombudsman to place Ponce under preventive suspension pending investigation considering that the evidence of guilt is strong," said Marilyn Colmo, the director of the Ombudsman public assistance bureau.

In a statement, the Ombudsman said there were "dramatic increases" in the net worth that Ponce had declared, particularly in the years 1998, 1999, 1999, 2000 and 2003, which he could not satisfactorily explain.

It said his wife's business interests in five companies—Cagayan Satellite Program Network Inc., Sigbin consultants, Jeonbuyo Trading, Pyber barbershop and an unnamed video shop—were not enough to justify all their assets.

"Likewise, it was alleged that his net worth for the years 1998, 1999, 1999, 2000 and 2003 far surpassed his declared income as a public official, and by the facts showing his wife's businesses, one of which started only in July 2000 with P75,000 capitalization," Colmo said.

Another significant detail that Ponce allegedly concealed in his 2003 SALN was his acquisition of a P7.1 million residential house and lot in Bernabe Homes in Quezon City.

Apart from administrative offenses like "dishonesty and grave misconduct," which carry a maximum penalty of dismissal from government service, Marcelo said Ponce was also criminally liable for "perjury."

Ponce had allegedly lied in his 2003 SALN by keeping hush public records his fictitious property when stating one very "questionable," making the evidence against him "strong," according to Colmo.

His suspension was issued after presenting Ponce from interfering with records and harassing prosecutor witnesses, the Ombudsman said. Nelson F. Flores

Japanese prof in Pagsanjan HS graduation

JAPANESE scholar, author and philanthropist Shimbashi Ikki will be the guest speaker at the graduation ceremonies of Pagsanjan Academy High School in Pagsanjan, Laguna, on April 2.

Professor Ikki, a graduate of Tokyo University majoring in literature and history of Japan, worked in various capacities with a number of organizations in Japan, including the Ministry of Education and the Tokyo College of Music.

In 1970, he has lived in the Philippines where he founded the Philippine-Japan Cultural Institute, taught Nippongo and staged cultural presentations on the films of Kurosawa, Kabuki, Noh theater, origami and flower arrangement.

He has authored a number of books including "The Paradise in the Philippines," "Report of My Story in the Philippines," "Dreams, Memories and Whispers" and "The Philippines: the Unknown Veiled Face," among others.

Pagsanjan Academy was founded in 1920 by the late Pedro Llamas, a 1908 graduate of the University of Michigan in the United States.

Bishop assails gov't, Luisita on killings

By Christine F. Esguerra

ANOTHER Catholic bishop has come out speaking on the raging Hacienda Luisita conflict, criticizing both the government and the Cojuangco-Aquino clan that owns the vast sugar estate in Tarlac.

Lingayen, Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz was incensed at the idea that sugar farmers were often portrayed as the aggressors, saying in their association with left-leaning organizations.

"Why is it that media should always be held by those holding power, by those having wealth, by those wielding guns?" he asked in a statement. "Must the poor and the helpless, the powerless and dissenters be always wrong?"

Cruz cited the violent pulse and military dispersal that killed seven protesters at Hacienda Luisita last November.

Both the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces were quick to announce that the New People's Army had actively and instigated provocations as part of a supposed effort to destabilize the Arroyo administration.

Through pinkwing workers and their sympathizers were mostly identified with the Left, the prelate said the military and police allegation was "firm, obvious, easy and wrong."

Cruz said it was wrong for authorities to persecute those simply because they joined the barricade, defended their rights and supported front organizations of political activists.

"They conveniently forget that truth is beyond the Right and the Left," he said. "Truth is not monopolized by the Right. And the Left is neither always wrong. It is about time that people come to realize and accept the reality long since passed into words from mere jargon."

Cruz reminded the rich and the influential that they were once "poor and helpless."

"Many of those now in power and authority were protesters and dissenters before," he said.

Also the other day at least 10 residents of Barangay Cutcut in Luisita were taken from their homes and "invited for questioning" by the military at around 5 a.m., Bel Ala, public information officer of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, told the Inquirer.

The residents were identified as Ernesto Ebreid, Rony Ebreid, Ernesto Bebayne, Jun Bebayne, Aiber Dominguez, Boy Dominguez, Dan Bacani, Jerry Bituin, Alnero Gupilo and Mario Cortez.

Ala claimed that they were asked but refused to sign an affidavit that they had surrendered to the government. They were purportedly released in the evening.

"The incident shows that the military is indeed a party to the targeting, abduction and killings of activists," he said in a text message.

Offers available from April 1, 2005 on selected stores

ELECTRICALS

CARRIER Power Saver
₱10,999

CONDURA Window Aircon
₱9,999

KODAK Digital Camera
₱6,499

OFFICE CENTRE

Computer Table
₱1,699

Writing Table
₱1,599

NETCOM Dri Corded Phone
₱499

HOUSEWARE

Bathroom Set
₱99

Ribbed Glassware Set
₱599

Baking Set
₱99

ELEKTRA Dual Mug-Rack
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APPAREL

Striped Towel
₱99

Kitchen Towels
₱129

BLAZE Men's
₱199

ELECTRICALS

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Corrections

IN THE report "Special session on SSS' off to shaky start over quorum" which was published on Page A1 on March 31, the name of Sen. Mar Roxas was inadvertently not included among the 14 senators who answered the quorum call on the first day of session. He was among the first to arrive for the special session.

* * *

THE STORY "SC won't reopen Mamasapano" on Page A2 of the March 9 issue misnamed Mar Mohenda Guiloman as an airport ground employee. Guiloman, who was identified by the military as the alleged associate of former Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, was described by then Maj. Gen. Prospero Olivas as "a mastermind responsible for the bombing" of the Finding Board in 1983. Other witnesses, however, described Guiloman as a farmer and part-time tricycle driver. He did not work in the airport as all.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, April 1, 2005
Season of Easter: Friday

1st Reading: Acts 4:1-12
Gospel: Jn 21:1-14

JESUS revealed himself to the disciples by the Lake of Tiberias. He appeared to them in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas who was called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together, and Simon Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing." They replied, "We will come with you" and they went out and got into the boat. But they caught nothing that night.

When day had already broken, Jesus was standing on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus called them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered, "Nothing." Then he said to them, "Throw the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they had lowered the net, they were not able to pull it in because of the great number of fish.

Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" At these words, "It's the Lord," Simon Peter put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and jumped into the water. The other disciples came to the boat dragging the net full of fish; they were not far from land, about a hundred meters.

When they landed, they saw a fire of coals with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you've just caught." So Simon Peter climbed into the boat and pulled the net to shore. It was full of big fish—one hundred fifty-three of them—but, in spite of this, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast," and not one of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" for they knew it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish.

This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to his disciples after rising from the dead.

Commentary

This is likely breakfast on the beach, with Jesus as the host, providing a menu for. Quite old and semi-broiled and fish (Zebedee's calling is itself) and summary disciples to come and eat (Eucharist). They are out fishing as they were before they followed Jesus... they have gone back to their own lives. Jesus is on the shore, calling them to him, and telling them where to catch fish. The holes are deeply recognize Jesus and (also see the Resurrection proclamation). It is the Lord. What puts on his clothes and jumps in the water (baptism) and they come to land. They are fed by the risen Lord: yet do not ask who he is, the awkward breakfast that is also reconciliation and forgiveness, the start of a new relationship between Jesus and the disciples, and one that is called now to be missionary, to reconciliation and forgiveness. It's the only time they will see him, and probably the last time to be fed.

FG Foundation releases ₱3.7M

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE FIRST Gentlemen Foundation will release today a total of ₱3.7 million in aiding local for athletes and lawmakers. FG Foundation executive director Rose Shingshan announced yesterday.

Shingshan said they have already disbursed about ₱2 million to different national sports associations for the athletes' hampers as prepare in their preparation for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

Athletes, which were the same number of gold medals for the country the past two SEA Games, will get ₱3.7 million in cheques in monetary reward title campaign to the SEAG slated May 27 to Dec. 3.

Records will involve ₱100,000. Last week, archery got ₱500,000, pencak silat ₱600,000 and wushu-star cycling ₱500,000, among others, for case-of-events tennis here and abroad.

Track and field is hoping to win at least 15 gold medals this time after bagging nine medalsight golds during the 2003 Bank Lampon and 2003 Vietnam Games, respectively.

Shingshan said support women are to press in for the "Medalyang Ginto, Hoy! Ipinas Tayo" program of Pres Gentlemen Miss Arroyo.

To be, she said, they have raised ₱100 million which will be used solely for the training of the athletes.

P. Princesa stages 6th Karagatan fest

AS PART of its efforts to promote Puerto Princesa City as the country's premier sports destination, the Puerto Princesa City government, headed by Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn, will launch the sixth Karagatan Festival on April 30-May 1.

An annual undertaking by producers and officials of Barangay Mapani, Bagumbayan, Mangrove and Bacungan, the Karagatan Festival will be held at the Binghawan Beach Court in response to the mandates of Presidential Proclamation No. 97 declaring the month of May as "Month of the Ocean."

"Everything is ready," said Hagedorn, who is organizing the event with Manuel "Boy" Manrique and motorcross legend Edward "Boots" Chase.

Chase said he expects more foreign visitors to watch the festival.

He said Smart Mobile Tours would provide everyone with access to top carriers PCSO country.

The three-day festivities will include mountain bike race, motocross, marathon, swimming, beach volleyball, biliard competition, fishing contest, kite-flying competitions, sand sculptures, tug-of-war, country dancing, tribal dance contest and concerts.

Cavite joins NBC preseason series

THE CAVITE Games of Vice Mayor Johnny Ahmad has opened the curtain to join in the National Basketball Conference's first time tournament two weekend that begin on April 9 at the Ryal Mansion Coliseum. Backed by the Cavite Governor, the tournament will be supported by Cavite Governor Ayong Maliksi and Mandaluyong Mayor Benjamin "Benjo" Abalos Jr. as special tournament. Mayor Craig and Mandaluyan Alex eying to the series are that against Spring of Mill pounded Northcoast "Tim" Paulino and Sen. Senator "Ringging" Lacson. Mayor Fortune Tengco's Forum-5 Tagaig, Bar Foundation Alfy of Vice Mayor and actor-TV host Aiza Seguerra and the PAP Coliseum Cavalier team. Manuel Isle, the Bigan Governor's team named Philly Reyes as their coach for the Pasay-area MBL outreach championship starting on April 23.

ELENA Bovanova reserve a serve during the 14th Mitsubishi Lancer Invitational Junior Tennis Championships. (MAR J. ARMENTA)

Groth, Eaton gain quarters

UPSET-CONSCIOUS Samuel Groth of Australia and Chris Eaton of Great Britain reached the quarterfinals yesterday in the 10th Mitsubishi Lancer International Juniors Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The Melbourne-based Groth first-fired out Fifth-seed Christoph Schoffl of Austria, 6-2, 6-2, to emerge as an early morning showdown with top seed Vivek Shoham of India, who subjected with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-1 decision over 16th pick Jai Bindra of Czechoslovakia.

Groth, who skipped the ATP Futures circuit back home to try his luck in the international junior scene, had earlier taken out eighth seed Phongsit Tonlamsak of Thailand, 6-2, 7-5, in the second round of the Group I event.

Eaton, who ousted fifth seed Alberto Escalera of Dominican Republic in a 6-4, 6-4 decision, will play Lu Guo-sheng of Hong Kong in the last of its class, 6-3, 6-3.

Eaton's next foe is Japanese Shuhei Uemura, who trounced off Chot Pekmaiyan, 7-5, 6-4.

Meanwhile, girls' singles top seed Chan Hong Nei of Taiwan and No. 2 seed Elena Bovanova of Russia breezed past their respective rivals.

Chan rounds three rods of No. 13 Olivia Lamontagne of Australia, 6-4, 6-2, while Bovanova, after a second-round struggle, did just enough to 6-4, 7-5 victory over No. 14 Ellen Barry of New Zealand.

Joining Chan and Bovanova in the last eight were third seed Hsu Shin-Hsin of Taiwan, fourth seed Mitsuki Fujiwara of Romania, No. 6 Vitali Ring of the US, seventh seed Arsina Rakhim of Kazakhstan, eighth pick Hwang Hyunsu of Taiwan and unranked Zheng Ling of Hong Kong.

The injured Andy Seymaurer of Belgium, 7-6 (3), 6-2, Bulatovova downed No. 10 Ekaterina Stolnova of Canada, 7-5, 6-3. Ring reigned supreme over Japanese Reiko Hikuchi, 6-1, 6-0; Rakhim downed off No. 11 Gandhaya Nugroho of India, 6-2, 6-0; Hwang beat 2006 seed Nikola Fabiko of Mexico, and Zheng, who ousted fifth seed Nicole Bernard of Canada in the second round, thumped Julia Boser of Great Britain, 6-2, 6-2.

The day also saw the complete wiping out of Filipino campaigners as Jasper and Lei remained in the all-boisome to beat out Kyle Joshua Tanedo and Sophi Sara, 6-3, 6-3, in the quarterfinals after Hilden Blake and Cecile managed off Miguel Gomez and Nikki Oliveral II, 6-4, 6-0.

RP female jin hurt sparring with male foe

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ITHAS been an accident.

This was the explanation given by Philippine Taekwondo Association executive vice president Hong Sang-chon Hong yesterday on the injury sustained by taekwondo Ms. Gilbelin Rivera during a recent sparring session against RP team mate Bita Reaves.

Hong was reacting to a report that Cecilia Reyes Crispin Reynolds made a congressional investigation of the incident which the congressman said amounted to "the mauling of a woman by a man supposedly in the name of sports."

"It sanctioned mauling if ever there is one," said Reynolds of the match that saw Rivera, sporting 4-0 hit counter, emerge with a broken toe and chin. She was hospitalized for nine days, Reynolds added.

Hong said what happened to Rivera was just an accident which takes place even in other sports and that he immediately halted the "taekwondo" after the incident.

Hong said Reaves was quickly given medical attention for her "minor injuries" that according to the hospital's Youth Doctor notwithstanding could be entirely prevented because of the concern of the sport.

"This is not the first time it happened in taekwondo and in other sports like basketball, which is not even a martial art," added Hong.

He stressed that female jins are normally pitted against their male counterparts for just one round to test their skills against an obviously stronger opponent, a practice that cannot be found usually when battling foreign rivals in international events.

"But these practices are regulated and not every or for anyone get hurt intentionally," Hong told the Inquirer. He added that neither Reaves nor her parents lodged a complaint against the training program.

Meanwhile, Hong said he was provided by his associate with photos of Reaves showing the extent of her injuries. He added that Reaves' jaw had to be wired and she is now on a liquid diet for two months, effectively removing her chances to compete in a tournament in Thailand.

MGM villa story makes Mike Arroyo pure and golden

BARE EYE

Macab Trinidad

JUDGING from the frantic rush to outdo one another, the First Gentleman, Mike Arroyo.

Nothing wrong with that, but Mr. Arroyo cheerleaders and assorted defenders, including one congressman who could not properly comprehend English, should watch out.

If they don't, their wannabe hero could land way past the gates of heaven.

That's very dangerous, a well-meaning fellow like Mr. Arroyo, suddenly the subject of unwholesome praise, sending epic flutes.

He can only blame indulgent fellows who, in their diligence, sometimes in mind things would agree to disfigure facts in order to fortify their lies.

Like the case of watching, anthony Miranda Jr. alerted, identified as the spokesperson of the administration House] party who told the inquirer "had clarified that no Filipino actually stayed in the $20,000-a-day suite" at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

That press announcement one joint yesterday inside the Senate (left in the report by Sil C. Cabangbang and Philip C. Tubeo) on Mrs. Arroyo calming had taken up the cudgels for Mike A in the case of the Las Vegas luxury suite.

As expected, we got side wondering if we had decoded, made a harassment in the 33-Riverside entertainment.

Here's one of the text messages we received: "Kaloy ngo si former Speaker Arroyo kasi di nya alam na may tao sa kanyang pangalan na nag-check in sa Riverside ang mga kasama si Jocelyn Limsiaco dun sa 33-33 suite daw?"

The guys who shared the labor in this story, the French Gil and Philip, explained the Miranda claims was an part of their report.

A check found it was contained in a piece no lesser than you squirmed in by the desk was the story.

Of course, I felt bad because the claim by this congressman had made the Internet look irresponsible.

And who would I take the pains of disputing on the floor of MGM, to gather the elusive details on the $20,000-a-night suite, only to make a [illegible]?

That's silly. I'd come up with the report, without personally disturbing Mike Arroyo or the current occupant of the luxurious MGM Villa, only after I had gathered enough solid facts.

I know it would stir a hornet's nest, but I also happen to have with me the confirming documents of one congressman who had invited me to dine at the villa.

This congressman later openly identified Mr. Arroyo as the main occupant of the luxurious villa. I attached the video we had to us both.

Once the issue started to crash fire, friend and defenders of the First Gentleman worked double time to cushion the image of their venerable patron.

In his column yesterday, Mon Tulfo also chained somebody else must've given the suite to Mr. Arroyo.

Whom Mon: "Perhaps Efren Gonzales, chair of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), coordinated with MGM hotel for Mike Arroyo to be given a luxury suite."

But, exactly was what I had expected, as was of in Gen Red column on the case last week.

Yes, there was nothing wrong grotesquely.

But why would the Pagcor chief do that sly thing?

Is the service of wonder?

Or to ensure that Mr. Arroyo will continue helping him?

You know what? The Tulfo piece on the First Gentleman brought tears to my eyes.

Yesterday was not my church day, but I had to rush to the San Felipe church in one city to observe soul-searching.

Yesterday's press was one of Tulfo's splendid reportage.

Here, pardon me saying this partly, you did me, ultimately in painting the First Gentleman as a modern-day angel.

It was so lavish that, after reading the piece, I felt the President, with her sagging popularity, was suddenly unworthy of the First Gentleman, who has been in a league pure and golden.

That's all folks.

Yesterday was not my church day, but I prayed for the First Gentleman.

Today is not also my column day, but I had to ask for quiet space to make this confession.

It's hard to keep things bottled up in your chest.

I also broke a promise to a dear friend, who called all the way from LA, to request for a member up the MGM villa issue.

It doesn't feel good disappointing a friend.

But since I had no resource after our suspension, who could not comprehend what he was[illegible] to make the business look silly and cheap.

Malaysian tugboat crewmen seized by RP gunmen off Sabah

JESSICA LUBAYEN ...Gun-wielding pirates attacked a Malaysian tugboat and kidnapped three of its crew members in the Sulawesi Sea close to Philippine waters, police and officials said Thursday.

The gunmen, armed with assault rifles, boarded the boat in Malaysian waters off Semporna in the eastern coast of Sabah on the east island before fleeing towards the southern Philippines with the boat's captain and two crew, a district police spokesperson told AFP.

"We believe the kidnappers could be from the Abu Sayyaf," he said.

Philippine naval forces have been sent to track down the gunmen, who were identified as "pirates" by the Navy espousal chief in southern Philippines.

"Our naval units are checking the islands of Tawi-Tawi," said Commodore Rufino Lopez.

The Malaysian-owned Tong Guan 91 was on its way back to Batulaksan in Sabah from Indonesia when it was attacked at around 11:00 a.m. local time on Wednesday, its owner Vincent Chung told AFP.

The gunmen seized the boat's radio communication set and mobile phones, said Chung, director of Sandan Penggelidupan Sungguan.

The gunmen abducted the tugboat's captain and three crew members, all of whom are Indonesians, he said. Its cannons deemed had been stuck, he added.

The remaining crew members arrived in Sandakan on Thursday, AFP

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LAS VEGAS SUITE

Mike A: It was free; what's the problem?

By GVC Calasanguin Jr.

PETA his grandmother Mikaela sitting on his lap, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo yesterday faced the press for the first time since the controversy arose over his alleged use of a $225,000 suite while in Las Vegas during the seven betting spree between Manny Pacquiao and Erik Morales of Mexico.

At a press conference in Malacañang yesterday, Arroyo said he did not see anything wrong. Aroyo accepting a promotion offer of a suite from the MGM Grand Hotel as he thought that his status as the husband of a head of state entitled him to such perks.

"It was free. What's the fuss all about? Why don't they check on Erap?" said the President's husband, referring to ousted president Estrada, who is known for his luxurious tastes and is now on trial for corruption.

Arroyo said that some friends of his had offered to pay for a room for him at the same hotel but the hotel management offered to give him complimentary accommodation.

"What's wrong with that? No, I will pay! If it's free? What's the fuss all about? If it is free, would you want to pay? So what's their problem if it is for free?" said Arroyo who could not hide his anger.

"It was accommodation fitting a dignitary of my status as husband of (the) President," he said.

"I don't even know how much my room was because it was free, complimentary" said Arroyo, adding that there was no suite in the whole of Las Vegas carrying a $45,000 per night price tag.

The story first appeared in a blind item in a March 26 column which mentioned a certain female Trinidad which said that a "heavyweight bicker" of Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao had stayed in the $20,000 suite at the MGM Grand. The column did not mention Arroyo.

Ateneo University Leader Prince Mendoza on Monday called for a congressional investigation.

Arroyo's representative has come out claiming that the room that the First Gentleman had stayed in was given as complimentary accommodation and that it was not a luxury suite.

Trinidad yesterday denied having recanted his story as claimed by one of Arroyo's detractors, Isabela Rep. Anthony Miranda in an exposure story last Thursday (See Trinidad's column, A2).

In yesterday's press conference, Arroyo said he was used to getting upgrades not only for hotel accommodations but also for airline tickets. He said this each time embarrassing as he has had to cut down some of these offers.

"They [the airlines] upgrade me because I'm the husband of the President but sometimes I tell them down because I feel ashamed as I sang in the economy class," he said.

He said he was not a government official nor an employee of government and that he paid out of his own pocket for all his foreign trips and social projects. He also did not gamble or smoke, he said.

"If they saw anybody gambling there, it wasn't me. I don't even know how to gamble," Arroyo said.

Arroyo said the President recently laughed off rumors of his alleged gambling because "she knows I don't gamble, I'm stingy."

He said "the rumor-mongers" should at least have checked the prevailing room rates as the MGM Grand where the most expensive suite cost $6,000 a night.

He also denied that the room he stayed in was as opulent as claimed.

"Is there a tennis court in a luxury pool? Who said that? Did he see it?" he asked.

Arroyo said he did not know why his Las Vegas lodgings should raise such an outcry.

"Is getting something for free bad? Didn't they study that I went there to cheer for Pacquiao?" he said, adding that Pacquiao has more commitment during the four business Las Vegas stay was virtually a Mexican town.

Because of the controversy over his alleged lavish spoken lodgings, Arroyo said he was [illegible] Filipinos would think twice about going to Las Vegas to watch the fights live.

"So Pinoy will go there if all they will do is pay-per-view. Bawal [illegal] nga eh, will support 'lats. Bawal" said Arroyo, who blamed the opposition for spreading the rumors about his Las Vegas jaunt.

With a report from Ashel Lathop Jaculiano

Bank to appeal NLRC ruling

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROBANK banking giant Standard Chartered bank is appealing an order from a National Labor Relations Commission arbiter to reinstate a terminated executive and pay him P1.6 million in backwages and benefits.

In a statement yesterday, the bank acknowledged receiving on Tuesday the ruling handed out by Labor Arbiter Hilda Espina Jr. due to retired Manuel Barrios, its former vice president for HR Service Delivery and Industrial Relations.

Barrios claimed he was illegally sacked after he completed negotiations for Bendir bank's sale of unregistered securities.

But besides five entries, legal counsel of Standard Chartered Bank said:

"We were disappointed, but not totally surprised, by this decision. It is clear from reading the decision that the facts of the case have not been thoroughly reviewed."

"On this basis we will be lodging an immediate appeal with the NLRC. We hope that the facts will proved and that this unfair decision will be overturned," he said.

He maintained that the labor issue surrounding Barrios's case adhered to the universal principles of due process.

The lawyer said Barrios was found to have violated the bank's code of conduct which exempting the bank's employees participation in all of the bank's 20,000 employees worldwide.

"Mr. Barrios is the same senior officer who took advantage of his senior position while still serving the bank in said confidential information and made threat to force his platform to build cases against the bank, all of which were made of distorted claims and allegations," Gerodias said.

"It is Mr. Barrios who threatened to file various cases against the bank, and through his lawyer Frank D. Ponce Enrile, demanded that he be given payment of $2 million as settlement. Mr. Barrios attempt to position himself as the 'whistle blower' is both incorrect and opportunistic," he said.

Gerodias said the labor arbiter completely missed the reasons why HSR terminated the services of Barrios.

"In fact, before a hearing was conducted by an independent outside counsel, per the Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & De Los Angeles Law office and the finding was that Barrios had betrayed his obligation to the company by using documents which came to his possession as a member of the bank's personnel department, for his own personal and private gain.

"Sensitive information was shared with him in order to enable him to perform his job. But, Mr. Barrios betrayed that trust," he said. the same information to threaten the bank with litigation and adverse publicity if he were not given not only the paper losses in his investments but, in addition, the extravagant amount of $2 million," Gerodias said.

"Had Mr. Barrios not sold it to make the bank sweat in fear and give in, Mr. Barrios can lord-out his threat by filing numerous cases in various government offices which, by the way, all decided against him," he said.

Terror suspect stays behind bars

THE INTELLIGENCE Service of the armed forces of the Philippines (Isafp) has dug up a new arrest warrant against suspected Leyten bomber Tyrone Santos, also known as Unsud Santos, to derail his chances of being released from military custody.

Sally Jalpi, colonel Mig, for the warrant told a Quezon City Regional Trial Court on Wednesday that Santos is being held on the basis of an arrest warrant dated July 18, 2003, issued by a Cotabato, Tacloban Regional Trial Court for illegal possession of explosives and illegal possession of firearms.

Quezon City RTC Branch 223 Judge Ana-mon Cruz told Jalpi that Santos could post the P200,000 bail as he could be released.

In a press conference yesterday afternoon, Santos said Santos is still in their custody since he has not posted bail.

He said Santos has a second arrest warrant issued by Alaminos City RTC Executive Judge Jules Mejia dated June 2004 for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition.

The one-page warrant, a copy of which was shown to reporters, set bail at P60,000.

Ayuyao however did not give details about the second arrest warrant. He said they had only just discovered the second arrest warrant.

If Santos is able to post bail for the two cases, he would be released, Ayuyao said.

"We will file another case so that only his last life about to die here. We'll release him, unless there are other grounds for his detention," Ayuyao said.

The military said it is in love to keep Santos in custody a spokesperson of the armed forces said.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL: Manila Jaycees president Francisco Pablo Curlee II prepares to make the ceremonial toss-off at the 7th Wheelchair Basketball League at the ProSports Arena. With him is Pagpag chair Michael Barredo. Dozer (Disabled Athletic Club of Rizal) and TVFH (Tulosang Walang Hagdan) are disputing the title yesterday in the finals of the event being held in cooperation with Philpaks (Philippine Sports Association for the Differently Abled) and sponsored by Philam Life Insurance and Victoria Spring Purified Drinking Water

RP bets rule Paris Pencak Silat meet

A QUICK eight-man Philippine team won six gold and two all-ver medals to grab the overall title in the world-ranked 33rd International Paris Open for Pencak Silat 2005 held March 25-27 in Paris, France.

Christopher Tobio, who was given the best Athlete award by organizers, led the RP team gold medal haul by topping the Sanding category I bout Tunggal (50-55 kg) event.

Other gold medalists are Emmanuel Andres Bueta (61-70 kg), Marciel Bisda (78-70 kg), Rod John Bellos (80-85 kg), Larry Sarreal in the Open class, and Alhi Hernandez in the category Tunggal Duai.

Al Sabar Singbata (51-60 kg) and Berlyn Rotinsulu (100-55 kg) won silver medal in the world level event, which attracted teams from Europe, including the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries.

The RP team was sent to the event by the Pinoy Gentleman Foundation through the support of the Gallaty Pasilis Steel and Philtire Foundation.

Other teams came from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Belgium, France, The Netherlands, Turkey, Italy, Austria, Spain and England.

"So far, as preparations for the Southeast Asian Games are concerned, we can say that the team is on the right track," said Philippine Pencak Silat Association president Sultan Amadol Ikram II. "We hope to sustain this through the support of the PG Foundation and our guilds, too."

Final coach Dato Abdilmeer Ikram and foreign coach Indrarisus said the team's showing in the event indicates that the Philippines is becoming one of the world's best in the sport.

Legaspi shocks Ardina in jungolf nat'l playoff

MANILA Southwoods Masters and Riviera streaked to runaway victories in the team competition over in Mexico Legaspi stunned Dodot Ardina in a sudden-death playoff for the individual title at the close Wednesday of the 1st Jungolf National Club Championships.

Southwoods Montoya again bombed on Tonton Antolin, who settled for second in two event team Southwood Legends by 25 points for the top plum in Div. one I played at Mt. Sheinspet in Batangas.

Special division team Gene Boniche (52-154) and national team mainstay Mike Bihai (58-152) had to play second fiddle to his younger Antolin who claimed the overall individual title with 162 points for 54 holes.

Kristan Jess Jae Lee of Orchard won the girls overall winner, posting 51 (81) to beat the fastest Jaycee Aguja (80-1-81) in the fantasy junior tour inaugural.

After leading Riviera to a 36-point romp over host Camp Aguinaldo together with Tonton Antolin and Ali Ramos in Division II, Legaspi used birdies were left to settle the individual title.

And the unexpected happened as Legaspi slapped Ardina, who like a Junior World title and a couple of U.S. Kids World Championship titles under her belt, for first loss in a long time with a birdie on the first playoff hole.

The series, also sponsored by Philippine Airlines and Unilever, boasted 300 week in Baguio with a Ryder Cup-style competition. For inquiries call Gay @ 37-915-8893 or 915-9586.

Orchard's Helen Tapreal cap tured the overall title in Division Topping their respective divisions were Michael Limantilbeyna of Aguinaldo in Class C, 36 holes after Aguinaldo and Jose Sibayan of TIEZA in Class D, Nonoy and Wilmore Imperial in Class E, Mike Arevalo and Rey Rasos of Riviera in Class F.

In Division I, Mico Alejandro and Bombet dela Paz topped Class A, Hajji Alabra and Crystal Espenal shared Class B honors while Bondoc topped Rihai by two in the special division.

HORALES: Honored as Tijuana Distinguished Citizen

July fight for Erik

MEXICALI legend Erik "El Terrible" Morales is set for a grand return to the ring in July following his hard-earned unanimous decision win over Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.

Speaking to the Mexican press, Morales said his last fight against Pacquiao "was a very difficult fight," although he stressed that it left not much damage in him and he would require just a few months' rest before going back to the gym.

While HBO has already offered a July date for his next fight, Morales said the cable giant has not made known his possible opponents.

Morales said he welcomes a rematch with Pacquiao or a fourth encounter with compatriot Marco Antonio Barrera.

Pacquiao had earlier been advised by a plastic surgeon to rest for at least five months to allow the cut over his right eye to completely heal.

"I want to be the first Mexican boxer to conquer four world titles in four different divisions," Morales said Wednesday after he made a P10,000 donation to the Red Cross in Tijuana, Mexico, represented by Mr. Elfer Ibarra Ignacio de Stark.

Earlier, Morales was honored in Tijuana by his compatriots, who bestowed him the "Distinguido" (Distinguished) Citizen) following his ring win over Pacquiao.

Meanwhile, reigning Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation minimumweight champion Medel Mark Jacapata for Japan today as he gets for the third defense of his crown against Japanese Takenobi Kanagawa April 6 in Osaka. Jacapata will be accompanied by manager Josephine Ocampo, trainer Carl Villalosa Jr. and boxing judge Bruce Mc Farish. Salvani Lagumbay, Contributor

Rotary golfest goes to Baguio

BAGUIO City has historically welcomed Rotary's centennial golf tournament as its city council recently declared April 11-17, 2005 as "Rotary Week."

The 19th RCPPF golf fellowship tournament is set on April 13-16 at Baguio's two famous courses—Camp John Hay and Baguio Country Club, which are also the event's sponsors.

Vice Mayor Roy Bautista and councilors Jhong Mendoza and Tony Tabora sponsored the resolution hosting the golfest.

Fabulous hole-in-one prizes on all par 3s of both courses will be up for grabs daily, but for it will make P1 million each point, four others a car or the equivalent of P700,000, another four an 08HO mountain chair and the remaining five are 2 holes will feature 3 pins green with an expensive watch, a Paul Rardo Fellow Membership and a flat screen TV as prizes.

The sponsors include GMC, 08HO, Forces, Integrated Pipe Specialists, Negrense Security Services Inc., Lizette Jewellers, Pagcor, Asia Brewery, Deutsche Bank, Cathay Land, Community Innovations Inc., Citibank and Cathay Pacific.

For inquiries, call 09209139888 or 09209387631, e-mail rpffp@yahoo.com or fax 722-[illegible]

Ateneo-La Salle tiff starts with seniors action today

A RIBBONS competition today at the Alabang Country Club ushers in the 2005 Ateneo-La Salle duel meet which makes its Lim-Eh Lim and Edwin Tenga watch worth at least P150,000, the newest models of Nokia cellular phones and other exciting prizes.

The prizes will be raffled off to the expected 700 participants of the annual duel meet presented by PLDT and SMART after the regular Ateneo-La Salle tiff on Monday, April 4 at three championship courses of the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Collins Into the contending schools will be vying for team and individual prizes in a two-in one competition.

The perpetual Classic Cup will be up for grabs in the Challenge Division which is the regular Ateneo vs La Salle duel while the Fellowship Division is a side event where one golfer from each opposing side forms a team.

Organizers announced that the deadline for the early bird registration promo has been extended up to today. You still for both the seniors and regular competitions in 7 a.m.

Players who need just inches for the Hole-in-one Division will be matched on the actual day of the tournament also backed by Intramuros Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI), OSCI, (Philippines) Inc., Johnny Air Cargo as premier sponsors and Gun U Lou, Eagle Express, EPCIB, Institute Santos, Manila Bank, Ameritrust, American Express and Transcom as special sponsors.

The Classic Cup replaces the Ambassador Carlos Rolda trophy which La Salle retired after winning it from 2001-2003.

For inquiries, call the alumni affairs offices, 426-6001 for Ateneo and 525-4158/526-5612 for La Salle.

The tourney has already succeeded in raising funds for a scholarship grant to be awarded by each school's alumni association.

Each participant will receive complimentary golf clinic and instructional DVDs by SMART exclusive Inmitiv Nanobe, customized HM designs with their respective school logos and customized number sets for shirts.

Sidelights

BOB FERLES reports September Singh Villanueva are one of the youngest teams players in the world. Singh, who coached the Asian Davis Cup squad for four years before resigning to be with his family, is now coaching Villanueva, the country's top-ranked player who is also the highest ranked Filipino in the ATP Tour.

Singh's pronouncement were collected by Chua Yong Jun, the top-ranked World player, No. 1 Filipino and Southeastern Tennis Tournament player. "Filipinos are good. The thing I see are there is play against any of the top players in the world. I'm confident Villanueva [play against any] Filipino can [play against] any player," Chua said. Except the tournament is [not] the only [one] Villanueva [play] in the Philippines, Singh said. "You need to play [in] a few tournaments and although the level here [is] not as good as [that of a] different one [with more] Chua acknowledged.

[illegible]

The strength of the 18-member PLDT-Philippine Tennis Association Team [illegible] tournament is a pair to [illegible] that nobody knows [illegible] the team will be joined by [illegible] Chua and Villanueva [illegible] to play [illegible] in the international team [illegible].

In the [illegible] division alone, eight [illegible] were [illegible] one in the overall [illegible] the first time [illegible] top 10 in the 10-man [illegible] series. And one of the [illegible] is [illegible] Chua, who [illegible] Ramon Fredie Sison, Emmanuel [illegible] Jacob, Jr. Mario [illegible], Jose "Chito" Ong, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

27 constitute a quorum? Yes, say 2 House leaders

By Michael Lim Ubac

ONLY 27 members of the House of Representatives showed up during the session yesterday prompting Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (CDP, Butuan) to question the lack of a quorum.

But Rodriguez's protestations fell on deaf ears since House rules allow for a smaller number of members to convene holding a session after the chamber merely suspended and did not adjourn the other day's session.

The House leadership maintained that only the Senate needed the requisite quorum to finish its four deliberations on the value-added tax (VAT) measure. The House had already approved its VAT version.

Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, and Rep. Eduardo Gullas (Cebu, Center) chose to open speaker, earlier said that a quorum was not a prerequisite to the holding of a special session.

"The House of Representatives only needs to open the session, and well just have to await the outcome of the bicameral conference report," Gullas said.

Both Cuenco and Gullas cited Sec. 16, paragraph 2, Article 6 of the 1987 Constitution, which says that "a majority of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a smaller number may adjourn from day to day."

This means that a smaller number of congressional members, in the absence of a quorum, has the same power to open the session, according to Gullas.

Cuenco said that the House need not muster a quorum to open the special session because the "battle ground will be at the Senate."

Congress adjourned on March 18 for the Lenten break without acting the bicameral version of the tax measure, prompting Pres. Benigno Aquino to issue a presidential proclamation on March 15 calling on Congress to hold a special session to pass the VAT bill.

With the Senate still mired in floor debates, the House, before adjourning, saw it fit at the time to constitute its Senate panel headed by House Majority leader Neptali Gonzales and Rep. Jerry Lagos, chair of the House committee on ways and means.

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte said the House Senate panel was now sweating its Senate counterpart so that both panels could promptly reconcile disagreeing provisions in the separate versions.

Only then can the tax measure be ratified by both chambers, and subsequently signed into law by Mr. Aquino, he said.

"We are waiting for the Senate to approve the two VAT bills so that we can go into conference committee. That's what we are waiting here for. We're doing nothing," he bitterly said.

The House approved a two-percentage point increase in the VAT rate on Jan. 27, and lifted VAT exemptions on Feb. 28.

GMA willing to risk political capital

Turn to page A10

raised inability to contain inflation, curb corruption and maintain peace and security.

Ms Arroyo noted that she was implementing tough fiscal reforms at a time when the economy was ending from high oil prices.

But the President said she had no choice but to push for those reforms because the country's situation for making the needed changes was getting narrower.

"Otherwise we will suffer a fiscal collapse a couple of years from [now]," she said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Wednesday the government was planning in hopes on the approval of the VAT measure to restore the slide in the President's approval ratings.

Mistake

But two opposition senators said it would be a mistake for the President to rely on the passage of the controversial VAT bill to reverse her low approval rating.

"The passage of the measure would mean her popularity ratings to harden opinion drops, former Senate President Jovito Salonga (D-ranked 26 said.

"She has already hit rock bottom in terms of popularity because of her erroneous policies," Pimentel told reporters at the opening of the Conference of Southeast Asian Parliamentarians against Corruption in Pasay City.

"As a matter of fact, she will add to her woes rather than help her out of her predicament for the simple reason that the [passage of the] value-added tax in VAT would mean more hardships for our people," he said.

Echoing Honasan, Sen. Edgardo Angara said it would be wrong to pin one's approval rating on a single measure like the VAT since a tax law was always unpopular.

He said there must be reforms in other areas such as education, health and food. "We have already exhausted the tax frontier," he told reporters.

As the Senate of Representatives, Minority Leader Francis Escudero said Ms Arroyo's persistent lobbying for the passage of the VAT reform measure was to blame for the latest plunge in her popularity rating.

"It's VAT," said Escudero, "and the fact that the government has not done anything to improve the quality of life of the poor is our country."

Escudero said the non-passage of the VAT measure could somehow shore up her sagging popularity rating.

Writing on the wall

Lawmakers associated with the Left capitalized on the drop in Ms Arroyo's ratings to paint yet another doomsday scenario.

"The shrewd hand is the 'writing on the wall' or here the same line as her predecessor did," said Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño.

Casiño said Ms Arroyo's popularity rating was immensely low, or than that of then President Joseph Estrada a few months before he was ousted.

He noted that the President's popularity among "poor dorm as far as the prices of commodities goes up" because people were worried about inflation.

Bitter pills

Vice President Jejomar Binay, who is also the chairman of the Senate, stating the presidency was not a popularity contest.

De Castro, a popular broadcast journalist before becoming the second top official of the land, said the President's low approval rating was "not a cause for worry."

"In the midst of the crises and disasters the country faced in the past months, the government was constrained to undertake unpopular actions and programs to ensure the country's survival," he said at the inauguration of a housing project in Barangay Malonga in Pasig City.

De Castro said "unpopular" programs and decisions made by the government were the bitter pills that people must swallow to enable the country to get back in action.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President "accepts" the results of Pulse Asia's survey.

Tool for management

Bunye said the President looked at the Pulse Asia survey as "a tool for management" to determine what areas should be given more focus.

"Since the root of our problems is economic, then the President is answering with an economic solution," Bunye said.

While the might be pained by her resulting popularity, Bunye said this did not mean she was not empathizing with the Filipino's struggle to cope with the rising cost of living.

"The President understands only too well the difficulties being encountered by the people and the government is doing all it can to mitigate these through protecting consumers, monitoring the markets and leading the energy conservation campaign," said Bunye via a statement.

The President defended her move to raise taxes "to bring economic stability and predictability to the Philippines economy."

Bunye explained that the long-term solution to high prices was achieving economic growth, creating high-paying jobs and attracting foreign investments.

Focused

Ms Arroyo said she was "focused like a laser beam" in trying to solve the country's ills, including the surging oil prices.

"If you look at the price of oil at present in the Philippines compared with other countries, it's lower," Ms Arroyo told reporters in Bataan City.

She said crossing "new high-wage jobs" was needed for the people to cope with rising prices.

To address the problem of high prices in the short term, the President said the government was running "unsateful" spending, protecting consumer rights and monitoring the markets. *Reports from Jeff Caballero Jr., Christine Cf. Avendaño, Lyn Ruiz & Delmen and Michael Lim Ubac*

With VAT on menu, Palace wines, dines some solons

From page A1

could be signed into law in 15 to 15 days.

"They are too raw now about that," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., however, said.

More special sessions

Apparently miffed at the slow pace of the deliberations of the VAT measure in the Senate, Ms Arroyo yesterday threatened to keep on calling for a special session of Congress until the measure was passed.

Asked whether the executive branch would settle for other revenue-generating measures other than the VAT, Ms Arroyo was firm on Malacañang's desire to have the VAT measure approved.

"I'm very confident that the numerous-day and extra days of our legislators will prevail. [So I'm not doing a Plan B," the President said in Bataan City.

Ms Arroyo also dismissed the possibility of her meeting with Senate leaders to grind their differences over the VAT bill.

"They're debating on the best kind of law that is [needed for] the balance of the P80 billion that I asked for. They know that. So I'm confident in their wisdom and patriotism," President Arroyo said.

Receptive to signals

Before she delivered a 10-page privilege speech titled "Yes to VAT, except pawnshops and petroleum," Santiago told reporters that the House and the Senate "will be very receptive to presidential signals."

Asked if the President had already sent signals, Santiago said: "Well to my case, I had dinner with the President and I suggested to her that the rubs out to dinner everybody else."

It is not known if the President took Santiago's suggestion.

The senator said it was she who asked the President about Malacañang's stand on the issue. "I want to know what I'm being fed for."

The President was quite frank, coming about what she wanted, Santiago said.

VAT hike necessary

"Well, she said that for every day that we delay the passage of a VAT law, the government loses so many billion pesos in interest and so she was appealing for passage, ability in the passage of bit bill," Santiago said.

The President, she said, "did not dictate what form she prefers."

"Initially she expressed hesitation to the proposal that will allow the VAT to remain at 10 percent but will give to the President the power to raise it to 12 percent under certain conditions. She did not want that provision but I suggested that she has recently said that she is willing to accept any responsibility if I signed on her bill. So VAT law as long as it is passed promptly," Santiago said.

The senator, however, said her dinner with the President had nothing to do with her increasingly active assertion of the need to raise VAT from 10 percent to 12 percent and to exempt power and petroleum.

"No, because actually before I met the President I had already gone through the papers of my economists' consultants and they were unanimous that VAT is necessary and that exemptions should be removed," she said.

Santiago denied her preference for the House version, which allows the VAT rate to 11 percent.

Timetable

The Senate leadership gave an optimistic timetable for the passage of the measure.

"Based on informative discussions held yesterday, we can expect many busbuys in the next two days. I am optimistic that we shall have a socially sensitive VAT measure enacted into law in 10-15 days," Pangilinan said.

"We are looking at hammering out in the bicam by next week a compromise version ready for Malacañang's signature by the second or third week of April at the latest," he said.

The final shape of the VAT will emerge from the bicameral conference committee, usually referred to as the third chamber where differences in the Senate and House versions are ironed out.

Pangilinan assured the public that the "Senate is focused on, addressing the fiscal deficit head on, and without further delay."

Drilon said he was confident the metropolitan would be finished last night so that they could go to the period of amendments today.

By 6 p.m. yesterday, Santiago was done interpellating Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee. Opposition Senator Jinggoy Estrada and Sergo Osmeña are the last two senators set to interpellate here.

Asked if the bill would be passed today, Drilon said: "In my view we can still do that because today, this afternoon, we will try to finish with the questions of the three senators."

Showdown

Senators expect the Senate deliberations during the period of amendments, when some senators are expected to propose the increase in the VAT rate to 12 percent and the continued exemption of the power and petroleum products.

The majority of senators were said to be in favor of retaining the VAT at 10 percent but Santiago said many administration senators are more actually in favor of the increase.

"It is possible to get it passed (earlier). But as I said, the real struggle is at the Senate meeting for one simple reason—the two versions are entirely different," opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara said.

Angara said the Senate version was "more superior" because it expanded the VAT base without raising the rate.

"To me a potential or possible compromise is that the Senate should adopt the Senate version because it expanded the coverage and with that, the yield is equal to an increase of two-percentage-points," Angara said.

Defects in Senate bill

But Santiago was confident that the House version would prevail.

"A bicam is really an end game (where) you have eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation and the first one to blink loses. There are many defects in the Senate bill," Santiago said. *With a report from Cheche Lotilla & Avendaño*

A MEATY proposal as President Arroyo hears Sen. Miriam Santiago on how to get the measure for VAT for her. PHOTO

'Lipo' fat can be used to sex up private parts

From page A1

misconception? Or are these transplanted to make fat cells or stubborn[ed people]?

Yes, but the fat can be transferred elsewhere in the body. There can be more fat augmentation procedures that is, fat excised out of a patient can go to other body parts that need replacement.

According to Dr. Rene Hans Raz, cosmetic surgeon and OB gynecologist, "new methods of fat transfer have to be used as transplants in breast." Instead of the silicone gel."

From abdomen to breasts

Such was the case of her recent patient, a "flat-chested" woman who had fibromacy undergone liposuction. Raz extracted from her abdomen some fatty tissues into her breasts. In fat, according to the doctor, the woman is doing very well.

Well-known cosmetic surgeon, Dr. Manny Calayan, said the technique is safe but "cosmetic cases involve profit enhancement."

According to him, the process involves using transfer syringes to suck the fats and setting aside these syringes to allow for the separation of fats and liquids, after which the fats are injected into the part for augmentation.

'Fillers for dents'

Fats to be transferred should come from the same person, Dr. Calayan emphasized, or there would be rejection by the body which would invite a stomach.

Other than the breasts and penis, fats can be used for cheeks and butt augmentation as well as "fillers for dents" like the lines around the forehead.

If a patient insists both the liposuction and augmentation, he or she does not need two or more separate sessions for the procedure to be done, Dr. Raz, discourages it, saying that "it is too costly."

Dr. Calayan says doing both procedures take about one and a half hours to two hours and then the patient can go home.

Biological wastes

And what if the excess fats have no other use for the liposuction parties? According to Dr. Raz, "our patients don't want to see their fats as we just throw in specific bottles and dispose them" like other biological wastes which are disposed in biohazardous waste bins. He added that "there is nothing toxic" about these fats.

But she had cases when patients asked for their fats, so these were placed in bottles and filled with formalin.

In Dr. Calayan's clinic, they have homeowners to burn the disposable fats.

Contouring procedure

Liposuction is a procedure that can sculpt the body by removing unwanted fats from areas that do not respond to dieting or exercise. It is not intended as a substitute for weight loss, but rather as a contouring procedure.

For women, frequently removed areas are the abdomen, hips, thighs (saddlebags), knees and chin. While commonly treated areas for men are the hips, love handles, abdomen, breasts and chin.

The best candidates for liposuction are people with firm, elastic skin with pockets of excess fat in certain areas. Ideally one must be physically healthy. Although age is not a major factor, older patients may have diminished skin elasticity and may not achieve the same results as a younger person with tighter skin.

During liposuction, fluid is lost along with the fat, which is why it is important that this fluid is replaced during the procedure to prevent shock.

Cysts

The five major advances on board liposuction was led by Italian gynecologist Dr. Giorgio Pitanguy in 1974 when he used a spoon-like surgical instrument attached to a suction apparatus to remove fats. From years later, French plastic surgeon Dr. Yves Gerard Illouz made use of percutaneous aspiration of fats. In the 1980s liposuction reached the United States where doctors developed methods to make the procedure safer.

Fatality

In the Philippines, a botched liposuction killed a 36-year-old woman in 1996. Despite this, the procedure continued to gain popularity after several movie stars underwent the procedure, including popular comedienne Rhel Bomba, a patient of Dr. Calayan.

Despite the rather prohibitive rates (P150,000 to P40,000 for B cosmetics, P20,000 to 25,000 for tummy tuck, P90,000 to 95,25,000 for breast augmentation), patients lining up to undergo the procedures come from all social classes as exemplified by the 29-year-old maid who recently underwent a tummy tuck.

And for those who really need cosmetic procedure but do not have the money, Dr. Raz's office has services for free to poor people who can visit her in her clinic on Taft Avenue and at Dr. Jose Fabella Hospital and St. Luke's.

SPORTSWATCH

Larrazabal bikefest roots off today

THE 47.9 km Larrazabal Bike Festival goes full throttle today in Nueva Ecija, Luzon, with national cyclists, distinguished and aspiring enthusiasts, mountain bikers and road racers and BMX aficionados, expected to partake in the event. The yearly festival is the only cycling event of its kind in the Philippines, as it occasionally promotes reminiscences and relics the three-stage cycling discipline in one weekend and one location. Named after former Senator Larrazabal said, Larrazabal is also the country's representative to the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA). Considered as one of the country's foremost cycling events, the bike festival will be held from April 1 to 3, 2005, and will feature mountain bike cross country and downhill races, as well as two-person competitions, for competing and BMX racers. Among those expected to participate in the three-day bike event are National Cycling Team members Eric Feliciano, Elmo Guillermo, Arnel Gabriel, Lloyd Polymedio, Martha Bibit and Marlito Lacsa. The event is also endorsed by the Department of Tourism as well as bike clubs such as the Federation of Off-Road Cycling Enthusiasts, the Integrated Cycling Federation of the Philippines and the IMBA.

SM holds summer sports tour

THE SM chain of malls, in its continuing effort to promote the public, particularly the youth, a venue where they could spend valuable time this time of the year, is bringing back the summer sports tour beginning tomorrow. On tap are badminton, rookie football, climbing and basketball. This is the second staging of the summer sports tour. Last year's tour had 10 venues in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The four sports disciplines will be staged simultaneously at designated SM malls for two days for the duration of the 12-week-long summer tour with games to start at 10 a.m. Team-interested boys under the events' organizers of their respective venues. Badminton will be played at 19 malls starting at SM Megamall tomorrow and Sunday, before moving to SM Megamall on April 9 and 10, while SM Southmall will host rookie football, hosted by Mikee Cojuangco, and 16-20 boys, 12 Sean Tecson/Rebonds Summit climb, will be played at other malls.

Paquiao, Mikee grace SCOOP forum

FIRING Manny Pacquiao's Champion Manny Pacquiao and Asian Games gold medalist Mikee Cojuangco make a rare appearance before the media when they appear in today's SCOOP Northpoint weekly forum at the Kamayan Restaurant-Pasay's back in Manila, Pacquiao, who lost a close decision to Mexico's Erik Morales in Las Vegas last month, will discuss his immediate plans in his quest to become the first Filipino—and Asian, for that matter—to win a third world title in three separate divisions. Cojuangco, winner of the gold medal in show jumping event at equestrian in the 2002 Asiad competition in Busan, South Korea, will talk about the preparations of the Philippine Equestrian Federation for the coming Southeast Asian Games the country is hosting late this year. Cojuangco, secretary general of the PEF, is expected to bring along Olympian Toni Leviste and Clarissa Crisostomo, in charge of the federation's corporate/press program. Session starts at 11 a.m.

Arlet, Parcon weigh-in slated

FLYWEIGHTS Jonathan Arlet and his fellow former Philippine Boxing Federation (BPF) rider Rexengel Cabanza Phillip Parcon will also each other on in the official weigh-in for their bout for the vacant WBF super flyweight title on Saturday. The Games and Amusement Board (GAB) will supervise the weigh-in before newly instituted World Boxing Empire (WBE) commissioner advisor for Asia Pacific region Carlos Armario leads the managers and officials meeting. The 10-round title fight will take place at the Jacobo Gymnasium in the Araneta Coliseum Ruffa Mumbilla City where, in the undercard, Allan Rubiata and Carlos Dangpad duke it out for the Philippine Boxing Federation (PBF) flyweight crown.

Former Hoyas join BEST opening

TWO American collegiate basketball players from Georgetown University will grace the opening of the Mike BEST Center's summer basketball camps on April 4 at the Mapua College indoor court in Intramuros City. The two—Othyus Jeffers and David Hawkins—were members of the national university said To the Philippines by the UBB Slide Department's Bureau of International and Cultural Affairs under its Cultural Connect program. Hawkins and Freeman are said residents of special awards in recognition of their successful team and off-court contributions. Freeman has remained unable to participate in the Hoyas' campaign in the NCAA season because of the Proposition Mickey Mouse Student Athlete award as well as the Captain's award. Also scheduled to be running sessions are PBA stars Paolo Mendoza of Rio Locsin, Pau Fernandez of Purefoods and Patrick Fran of Talk 'N' Text and collegiate players Larry Fonacier, Rhenmen Bautista, Joseph Yeo and Japan Sanders.

NCA derby features Manny

THE 3rd NCAA Collegiate Basketball Association (NCA) 3-Cold Derby is all set today at Ponap City College with participants from seven universities competing online. Today's 7-0 flight program will start at 5 p.m. Attention will be focused on coastlight enthusiasm and boxing hero Manny Pacquiao, who is up against tough opponents because of yesterday's marketing 24 entries. With proceeds for this program, said that will go to the NCA Scholarship Fund, for more information, sports director Tim for other inquiries, contact 8427 800, 8427 1 98 and 8506 702.

Religion hurts breeders' tilt

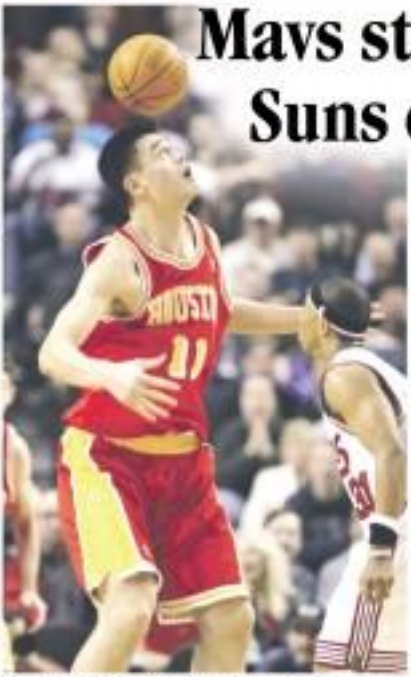
FOR SOON Magic Cordoba's Gamecha the No 6 Cock Derby, a four-day cockfest designed for small time cockers and breeders is all set on April 30-May 2, a spokesperson said. Expected to attract more than 300 cockers from different provinces. As of yesterday, more than 15 cockfighters have firmed up their commitment to join. For an entry fee of only P5,000, the guaranteed prize if cocker is P1 million. The fastest and strongest cocks however are expected to flop from hours bet. Meanwhile, the UB Feature Win Sec Cock Derby will start early at 7 a.m. tomorrow, Saturday, April 2, due to the big number of fights. Entry fee is only P2,200 but the guaranteed prize is P2M-300. Minimum of fight numbers 1 to 10 will get P3,000 each on losses. For other inquiries, contact 8020013, 8019 688 and 8019807.

AT ELLP BY MR. MM

Race 1—1. Hello Mavis 2. Miss Mirage 3. Secret Agent 4. Fallujah
Race 2—1. Puerto Rico 2. Solid North 3. Long Rider 4. Jones
Race 3—1. Fatima 2. Queen's Gold 3. Love and Peace 4. Kantoo
Race 4—1. Da Da Da 2. Stingray 3. Santo Dios 4. Southern Prince
Race 5—1. Sunrise 2. Speed Machine 3. Puppy Dog Tail 4. Wedding Vow
Race 6—1. Sweet Felicity 2. Just A Moment 3. Well Rested 4. La Big Senior
Race 7—1. Hot 2. Magic Dixie 3. Naughty 4. Solid Thank 5. Extreme Magic 6. Powerhouse
Race 8—1. Heart of the Wind 2. Slow Right 3. Kiss Singer 4. Morning Glory
Race 9—1. Paramount 2. Sir Brandon Jewel Singer Candy 3. Adaptive 4. Concorde 5. Magic Dream 6. Flying Jordan

GOOD SHEPHERD: Terry Capistrano (right), manager of the De La Salle University men's basketball and track and field teams and president of TMS Ship Agencies, and partner Robert Portolatin (left) receive their trophy from Country Club Invitational organizer and HTRI chair and president Enrique K. Razon after finishing runner-up in the event recently in Carmbong, Laguna. [Reporter Dela Isla-ruled the PLAM tournament

Mavs stretch Ce
Suns claim Pa



BOSTON—Dirk Nowitzki had 36 points and 10 rebounds, Josh Howard added 26 points and Dallas Mavericks overcame Shawn Marion's 24 points and 16 rebounds to beat the Boston Celtics 107-101 Wednesday night, handing the Celtics their fourth straight loss.

The Mavericks won for the ninth time in 11 games and continued to cash on the road, improving the NBA's third-best road record to 28-11.

"We worked on being able to close out games early in the season defensively," said Nowitzki.

Steve Nash had 11 of 12 after acquiring Antoine Walker, Boston has slumped, and Walker has shot 33 percent during the five-game slide.

In Phoenix, Steve Nash had a triple-double, Quentin Richardson set Phoenix marks for 3-point shooting and the Suns clinched their first Pacific Division title in 10 years by blasting Philadelphia, 110-69.

Nash, who played only 27 minutes, had a career-high 13 rebounds to go with 12 points and 12 assists. The stylish point guard drew a l
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WHETHER it was leaving over Yao Ming's head (top) or zipping right to lowerman Eric Snow of Carey Maggette, the home ball was everywhere in the NBA Thursday. AP/EPA

Yao shows up Korean

PORTLAND, Oregon—Yao Ming scored 29 points, and Tracy McGrady had 26 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to a 109-94 victory over the Trail Blazers on Wednesday, completing a four-game sweep of the season series against Portland.

McGrady's 3-pointer extended Houston's lead to 72-57 midway through the third quarter, and the Rockets went on a 6-0 flurry as many as 21 points for their sixth win in seven games.

The most intriguing matchup of the game was between 2.29 meter (7 feet 6) Pau and Portland's 2.21 meter (7 feet 3) Ha Seung-Jin.

Jin was selected by Portland in the second round, 46th overall, of last year's draft. He is the first Korean to play in the NBA.

Yao scheduled the 19-year-old rookie with physical play and a humbling blocked shot. Ha, who came in the game with 4:21 left in the first quarter, was appearing in just his 10th game for the Blazers.

Ha did not score, but had four rebounds in 15 minutes. Channel photo Reuters had Pau-based with 15 points.

Houston, in fifth place in the West, owns 5-1 on its road trip and will play six of its final 10 games at home.

McGrady had scored 16 points in the first, and 30-40 victory over Utah on Monday, showing no signs of a slight hip strain that had been bothering him recently. It was his fifth game with 40 or more points this season. AP

Mauresmo, C

Phil readies for Masters

AUGUSTA, Georgia—Reigning Masters champion Phil Mickelson will make his final preparations to defend the crown by playing here at the $5-million PGA in Richmond's Sandy starting Thursday.

Mickelson, who won here in 2004, is the event's top money winner with $1,731,424. In seven appearances, he finished 10th here last year one week before finishing his first major title down the road in Augusta.

"This will be a big week for me to get momentum and to get confidence in the way I've been playing," Mickelson said. "I've put a lot of time in. Now it's time to start having it pay off."

The pro-70, 7,200-yard TPC at Sugarloaf has undulating greens that provide a satisfying test for those competing to win next week's Masters.

"This course sets up great preparation," Mickelson said, "It gives me the opportunity to work on my game and get sharp and come every down when it counts up next week."

Also in the field is fourth-ranked Ernie Els, the reigning US Open champion who won here in 2002.

Jack Johnson, Mickelson's American opponent, edged Australia's Mark Hensby by a stroke here last year for his first LPGA Tour triumph.

Johnson has three consecutive top-10 showings, a third at Miami and eighth at Bay Hill and eighth again at his first Players Championship.

"I feel good about where my game is at," Johnson said. "It's a kind of a stretch where you want to get things rolling. I hope it carries me this week and into the last of the year for first major."

Johnson is trying to become the first back-to-back winner of this event since it has been in 1975 and 1976. There was an extra field in 1976 because the US Open was being conducted at the neighboring Atlanta Athletic Club.

Each contestant could send Johnson, 20 into the Masters with ensuing confidence. AFP

Why RP will win 2005 Asian 9-Ba

THE PHILIPPINES won the Sun Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour in 2004 thanks largely to former world champion Efren "Bata" Reyes, who won three legs of the five-leg series organized by ESPN then Sports Reyes hosted the 3rd leg in Singapore last year, beating compatriot and Prayer Sports teammate Warren Kiamco the second leg to Vietnam, outclassing Taiwan's two-time world champion Chao Fong-pang, and the fourth leg in Taiwan, defeating South Korea's Jeong Young-hwa.

I say the Filipinos will be winners again this year, aside from Reyes, also in the Brunei IGP event are seven-ace Francisco "Django" Bustamante, seven-time consecutive Family Table of Davao City who won this year's leg-all leg in Singapore; Lee Weng Kwong and virtual unknown Roberto Gomez Jr., who proved to be the biggest revelation in the qualifying series organized by Pocket Sport's under the auspices of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines.

The 2004 Sun Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour

CLEAN LIVING

Manuelo A. Mejo

Sports pursuer and newly elected billiards director Patch Pavia, who is leaving for Jakarta today, said he expects a tussle royale among the region's top players, notably between the Filipino and Chinese Taipei hotshots led by 16-year-old prodigy Ko Pin-Chia-ching. Pavia, a noted sports businessman, was personally tapped by Pres Gentleman Mike Arroyo to be the country's godfather for billiards in the soon-to-be-defunct Asian Games.

At the moment, Quezon City's Wife leads the Asian Tour rankings with 370 points, followed by Wu with 350. Filipino heavens Gallera and Taiwanese Yang Ching-shun (the only spot with 40 points apiece. Three-ranked Filipino players—Reyes, Bustamante and Gonzales—together with Yang Kwong Chung of Singapore are tied for fourth to eighth places with 30. Also in the rankings are William Ang Boon Lay and Toh Lian Hun of Singapore, Hassan Dimyati and Alok Kumar of India, Chao of Chinese Taipei, Ismuski Kusnadan of Japan and Nguyen Hoanh Nam of Vietnam. The top 16 players in the Asian Order of Merit will qualify for the 2005 World 9-Ball Championship tentatively set for July to Taipei.

Filipino-Canadian Alex Pagulayan won the world championship last year, also in Taipei.

After a disappointing start in the Asian Tour in Singapore this year, the 10-time-old Reyes bounced back by winning the Thailand Open in Bangkok last March. A third in the this year's Malaysia Open in Kuala Lumpur March 6 by 13-8.

"This tournament is very tough because 32 year-old players from all over Asia are competing and only eight will qualify for the 2005 World 9-Ball

eltics' woes; acific crown

Pacers vs Heat a likely preview

A Boholana shines in Florida

SPECTATOR

Al S. Woodward

Clijsters forge duel

ll Tour

The WORLD

Critic Lambert B. Botero

Over 700 aftershocks rattle Nias island

GUNUNG SITOLI, Indonesia—Rescuers worked through powerful aftershocks to pull more Ingoalor survivors from the rubble on Indonesia's Nias island Thursday, as efforts to bring in vital evacuation gear hit new snags.

More than 700 tremors have struck the remote island, all the result of disaster since Monday's massive 8.7-magnitude quake killed hundreds of people and spread panic in hotels from areas where there's a repeat of last year's tsunami.

The largest tremor was recorded at 8.3 on the Richter scale, on the same fault line that generated both Monday's quake and the Dec. 26 magnitude-9.0 disaster—and while seismologists insist most aftershock number killer shockwaves.

Officials say the toll could be as high as 2,000 while the United Nations said 620 bodies had been found so far. "We do anticipate that figure is still going to go up," said UN Development Programme spokesperson Imogen Wall.

Aid began to flow into the worst-affected island of Nias Thursday, bolstered by the arrival of three Indonesian warships bringing troops and supplies to the capital Gunung Sitoli.

But heavy duty excavation gear on board the vessels, which could be used to save people still clinging to life beneath the rubble, was not immediately brought ashore since there were no berths for the ships to dock.

"The reason difficulty we're facing now is heavy machinery. However, this equipment is on its way to Nias," said armed forces chief Satrario on a visit to the island.

"At all the moment there are already four excavators on board one navy ship but we're still trying to find a way to bring them ashore," he said.

Logistical problems, including runway damage that has closed Nias island's airport to bigger planes, have held up supplies and equipment to help survivors out of collapsed buildings.

But medical supplies, tents and food were flowing smoothly into the area. Singaporean military helicopters and United Nations evacuation teams poised for scores of other foreign aid missions, among contacting in the area after ending with the massive relief effort.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono also visited Nias Thursday ignoring constant rain to hug survivors and say prayers for the dead outside St. Mary's Catholic church in Gunung Sitoli.

"We are here in Nias, we will reject overthe-horizon politics," he told journalists who gathered at the church, along with mosques and Buddhist temples in the city, it has been used as a makeshift morgue.

Residents in the city people tried to salvage possessions, while a few hunted in the hope of finding loved ones still alive.

One young resident, Marlina, 20, said husband was buried in the rubble, nodded loudly outside the ruins of her home as three other women tried to calm her.

"If the body of my husband can be found, I will be glad, because he can then rest in the netherworld ... God, why did you take him, I no longer have someone to love," she cried. "Help, help me find him." AFP

A SINGAPORE special assistance military personnel carries an injured girl to a helicopter after a massive earthquake hit the area of Gunung Sitoli in Indonesia's Nias island March 31. Strong aftershocks rattled Indonesia's earthquake-devastated Nias island on Thursday as rescuers raced and flowed in supplies to new-gulled survivors and bodies out of the rubble of collapsed buildings. AFP PHOTO

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Tsunami-quake was 9.3, twice as powerful as thought

PARIS—In a reassessment of the Dec. 26 earthquake that unleashed the Indian Ocean killer tsunami, scientists say the tremor measured 9.3 on the Richter scale—more than twice as powerful as originally estimated and the second biggest quake ever recorded.

The quake split the ocean floor underneath four Sumatra along 1,200 km, more as long as previously thought, according to their findings, which appeared on Thursday in Nature, the world's British science journal.

The event released as much energy along this particular part of the fault line in theory from should be as quake of similar magnitude, or a similar moment, from another 800 years, said geologists Seth Stein and Emile Okal of Northwestern University, Illinois.

But in their words, it is a different picture.

The scientists—who wrote before Jean Hrusdka's quake, which also struck western Sumatra—assessed with uncanny precision that "a great earthquake" with the potential to generate 30 to 40 meters remained a threat south of the Dec. 26 site.

The Dec. 26 quake occurred off northwestern Sumatra, in the waters where the Indian plates of the Earth's crust is sliding under a longer shaped sliver called the Burma microplate.

It was initially thought to be 9.0 on the Richter scale.

But an evaluation of very low frequency data from seismographic shows that the quake was 9.0 TO 9.3 magnitude.

As the Richter scale is logarithmic, the difference between 9.0 and 9.3 is three, the study said.

"Conventional methods used to assess earthquake size dramatically underestimated it," the study said.

"[...] This makes the Indonesian earthquake the second largest ever to be instrumentally recorded."

Only one measured quake has been bigger: a 9.5 event that struck Chile in 1960.

However, the quake caused far less damage than compared with the 1960 largely because the grinding plates in vast Asia meet at an unusually oblique angle, causing the energy to propagate northward along a weakened fault.

Research before Thomas scientists, spin 16 fellow of the University of Science and Technology in Hefei, Anhui province, shed dramatic light on what happened on the floor of the western Indian Ocean.

Their computer model, also published in Nature, suggests that the quake delivered a high-frequency shock that lasted a amazing 500 seconds, compared with 500 seconds for the Chile event in 1960.

From Indonesia to just south of Burma (Myanmar), the scene ripped at 2.8 kilometers per second, most are measuring 1,200km.

The rip occurred along the so-called Sunda megathrust—the great tectonic frontier along which the Australian and Indian plates begin their descent beneath Southeast Asia.

Stein and Okal also estimate a rupture of 1,200 km, and say that the figure would explain why Sri Lanka and southern Indonesia actually hit by the tsunami. AFP

PHILAM PLANS

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

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Bush WMD commission faults US spy agencies

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush's commission on weapons of mass destruction has found that failures throughout 10 spy agencies led to botched estimates of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and it recommending dozens of changes to prevent future intelligence breakdowns, given mixed official coverage.

The commission also is expected to be highly critical of US abilities to infiltrate Iran and North Korea, considered two leading threats today. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the report was not yet public.

The commission was ordered by Bush after the Senate Intelligence Committee's report, spanning more than 600 pages. Thunder after more than a year of work that included closed-door sessions with Bush and other top administration officials.

Unanimous government reports have detailed intelligence failures since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The commission is the first turned by Bush to look at why US spy agencies mistakenly concluded that Iraq had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, one of the administration's main justifications for invading in March 2003.

Bush also asked the nine-member panel to review the structure of the nation's spy agencies and the major intelligence overhaul he signed into law in December.

Government officials said the commission's main conclusion seems to be that the intelligence community is deficient in its approach to analysis and overall, how spy shortcomings are affecting intelligence consumers on the battlefield, officials said.

The panel also considered a range of intelligence issues beyond Iraq, including congressional oversight, satellite imagery and electronic snooping, training numerous new spies, officials familiar with the findings say. "Human intelligence"—the work of actual spies on the ground—is lacking.

According to officials, the report also:

- Recommends hiring a more multilingual cadre to focus on emerging problem areas.
- Chastises intelligence agencies for their continued failure to share information, despite numerous reforms instead of improving coordination.
- Urges that the need for improving training be analytic and interview and new procedures for considering dissenting intelligence analysis.
- Calls on intelligence agencies to take more steps to encourage information from their sources a ranks—a move prompted in part by an Iraqi defector often provided inaccurate information ultimately labelled a top intelligence informant.
- Proposes updating the 1933 computers and creating a new secure network and a division within the Justice Department.

A year ago, Bush formed the commission led by Republican Laurence Silberman, a retired federal appeals court judge, and Democrat Charles Robb, a former senator from Virginia, after he became clear that US intelligence inspections were not going to find stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

White House spokesperson Scott McClellan has said Bush would discuss the report with Cabinet members on Thursday immediately after the president meets with the full commission. "Making sure we have the best possible intelligence is critical to protecting the security of people," McClellan said. AP

Grumpy Prince Charles calls reporters 'bloody people'

PRINCE Charles (center) and his sons Prince William (right) and Prince Harry pose for photographers in Klosters, March 11. The Prince of Wales and his sons are taking a private holiday in the Swiss mountain resort of Klosters. REUTERS

KLOSTERS, Switzerland—Prince Charles, a man about to marry the love of his life, Camilla Parker Bowles, has described journalists as "bloody people."

Thursday under his breath at a photo call with sons William and Harry, Prince Charles was caught on the accredited unaccredited unaccredited unacc

Study: Humans have polluted 2/3 of Earth's ecology

OSLO—Humans are damaging the planet at an unprecedented rate and raising risks of abrupt collapses in nature that could spur disease, deforestation or "dead zones" in the seas, an international report said on Wednesday.

The study, by 1,360 experts in 95 nations, said a rising human population had polluted or over-exploited two-thirds of the ecological systems on which life depends, ranging from clean air to fresh water, in the past 50 years.

"At the heart of this assessment is a stark warning," said the 10-member board of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

"Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted," it said.

Ten to 30 percent of mammal, bird and amphibian species were already threatened with extinction, according to the assessment, the biggest review of the planet's life-support systems.

"Over the last 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable time in human history, largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel," the report said.

"The loss resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on earth," it added. More land was changed to cropland since 1945, for some, than in the 18th and 19th centuries combined.

"The harmful consequences of this degradation could grow significantly worse in the next 50 years," it said. The report was compiled by experts, including from UN agencies and international scientific and development organizations.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said the study "shows how human activities are causing rapid environmental damage on a massive scale throughout the world, and how biodiversity—the very basis for life on earth—is declining at an alarming rate."

The report said there was evidence that steps on nature could trigger abrupt changes like the collapse of cod fisheries off Newfoundland in Canada in 1992 after years of over-fishing.

Future changes could bring sudden outbreaks of disease.

Warming of the Great Lakes in Africa due to climate change, for instance, could create conditions for a spread of cholera.

And a build-up of nitrogen from fertilizers washed off farmland into seas could spur abrupt blooms of algae that choke fish or create oxygen-depleted "dead zones" along coasts.

It said deforestation often led to less rainfall. And at some point, lack of rain could suddenly undermine growing conditions for remaining forests in a region.

The report said that in 100 years, global warming widely blamed on burning of fossil fuels in cars, factories and power plants, might take over as the main source of damage. The report mainly looks at other, shorter-term risks.

And it estimated that many ecosystems "are the source of several services that maintain them for future generations."

A wetland in Canada was worth $6,000 a hectare, as a habitat for animals and plants, a filter for pollution, a store for water and a site for human recreation, reported $2,000 if converted to farmland, it said. A Thai mangrove was worth $1,000 a hectare against $200 as a shrimp farm.

"Ecosystems and the services they provide are financially significant and ... to degrade and damage them is tantamount to economic suicide," said Klaus Toepfer, head of the UN Environment Program.

Reuters

FBI arrests Saudi prince's wife on maid abuse charge

BOSTON—FBI agents on Wednesday arrested a Saudi prince's wife on charges she forced two Indonesian women to work for her as servants and threatened them with "serious harm" if they refused, prosecutors said.

Hana Al Jadaa, 39, was arrested on federal charges at her home in the upscale Boston suburb of Winchester, Massachusetts.

A US magistrate judge ordered her held without bail pending a hearing on Friday afternoon.

Al Jadaa was charged in a 14-count indictment with forced labor, document servitude, falsifying records, visa fraud and harboring aliens in connection with two Indonesian servants identified only as "Ti" and "Si."

If convicted on all charges, Al Jadaa would face up to 140 years in jail and up to $3.5 mil.

Reuters

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OPINION

Election and destiny

EDITORIAL

IT IS unfortunate that for all its arguments legal correctness, the 14-page decision of the Supreme Court throwing out the petition of Susan Fariñas to substitute for her late husband, actor Fernando Poe Jr., in his electoral protest is presaged by the most quoted passage from the medieval Persian poet, "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam." While the inclusion of poetry in a legal document is refreshing, it also introduces an element of ambiguity that unleashes a flood of clashing interpretations.

"The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,/ Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit/ Shall have it back to cancel half a Line,/ Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it." In the context of Poe's death and the fitness/ unfitness of his legal team to substitute his wife for his protest challenging the proclamation of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President in the 2004 election, the lines may connote two complementary things: that Poe is dead, and there's nothing one can do about it; and that the substitution is a legal power, and there's nothing one can do about it. Both are correct interpretations. There's no use crying over spilled milk, especially if one has spilled it twice.

But what is unfortunate is that the poetry has been virtually inadmissible in a context that is foreign to it. As those familiar with the "Rubaiyat" know, the lines are hardly about resignation, but about destiny. The lines cited by the Court complete the 23rd stanza, and wrenched from the entire poem, it seems to have a meaning that could be twisted this way and that, as what the Supreme Court did in its decision. The real context—and misreading—of the lines are neatly established by the 22nd and 24th stanzas, the former opening with "Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days/ Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays," and the latter closing with "Ah, the fair Morning of Creation wrote /What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read."

It's quite obvious from the lines that the poem talks about destiny. So is the Supreme Court suggesting that Poe was destined to lose in the election and die protesting his loss, and that his wife was destined to be rejected in her attempt to substitute in his protest? Perhaps. But poetry does not a legal decision make. Our dear justices should dispense legal justice, not poetic justice.

So does the jacking of the petition dispense legal justice? The immediate reaction from legal pundits is that the decision is legally sound and correct, jurisprudence having established that the substitute should be a "party of interest." Since Poe's wife is a private person, and not a candidate in the last election, she is not conscious "who would be benefited or injured by the judgment," and thus is not "the party who is entitled to avail of the suit."

Moreover, it seems unsound for any party of interest, like losing presidential candidate Panfilo Lacson or losing vice-presidential candidate Loren Legarda, Poe's running mate, or even Vice President Noli de Castro, to save the day for the electoral protest and contest the presidency of Ms Arroyo inasmuch as the deadline provided by the law for the filing of such a protest has lapsed. And even if Poe's wife asks for a reconsideration or another chance for substitution, the Court is highly unlikely to change its mind. After all, the verdict was unanimous.

Therefore, as the Court upheld the constitutionality of Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo taking over President Joseph Estrada in 2001, it has upheld, by ruling Poe's protest as without merit, the legitimacy of her victory in the 2004 election. She is the President, whether Poe's supporters like it or not.

It then behooves Poe's supporters to recognize not only the validity of the ruling, but also the legitimacy of the presidency of his political enemy. It would be a gesture of democratic sportsmanship. It also behooves the President to extend the hand of reconciliation to her political enemies as a gesture of democratic magnanimity.

The decision should also put a stop to the talk by retired generals like Jose Almonte and Fortunato Abat of setting up a military junta to replace what they perceive to be an ineffective government. The talk is subversive, and the generals are naively taking the people's patience, aside from magnifying the widespread perception that the military gets special treatment in this country. Such talk is self-serving, vainglorious and selfish.

Ultimately, we should fix our electoral system. We should reform and computerize our elections. We cannot leave the fate of our democracy to destiny and poetic justice, even if the bench is filled with wannabe poets.

Professors are victims of academe inbreeding

WE will interrupt the series on the junior posters losing played by a cartel of multi-millionaire pharmaceutical companies victimizing Filipino patients to comment on the 11 timewasters of the Philippines professors and the valueadded tax bill that Malacañang wants Congress to pass.

This is being written a day before Congress is to begin its special session, and by the time you read this, the Senate would either have already passed the bill or adjourned without passing it.

My son and daughter-in-law are both professors of the UP School of Economics, and I am proud of them. They teach only graduate economics, but it doesn't mean that I agree with their professors, the so-called UP 11. Their Good Friday sermon that the VAT bill is the only salvation of the budget deficit has strengthened my long-held belief that most professors live in ivory towers. They're removed from the real world. This belief has been prompted by what I know in my field, journalism. As a career journalist, I know that many journalism professors won't even make the grade as reporters in good broadsheets. The good journalists are too busy with their jobs to waste time teaching, so it is those who don't make the grade who are inducted to teaching. This is not only my opinion; ask any reputable working journalist and he will have the same opinion. (There is why I have rejected many offers to teach journalism.) If that is true with journalism professors, it must also be true with economics professors.

Many professors, whose only world is the academe are victims of inbreeding. They studied in the same schools, were taught by the same professors, read the same textbooks, usually talked only to one another, dedicated by the academe, and whose only world is the academe. Many professors who are not familiar with the outside world, so they have the same ideas. They don't have any contrary ideas. So wonder the UP 11 all think the same way, even if it necessitates even an exact science like mathematics, with differing economic theories re-

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

passed by different economic gurus.

The contentions of the UP 11 that passage of the VAT bill, which will increase the VAT from 10 to 12 percent, is the only way to bear the budget deficit is faulty for two reasons.

One is that there are three ways to do it: increase collection, reduce spending, or a combination of both. Increasing collection doesn't mean increasing taxes only. It can mean more efficient collection of existing taxes.

The other reason is that the taxpayers will not accept any increase in taxes if they do not see any improved effort by the government to reduce spending. That is the real world.

How can you make the people accept paying more taxes when legislators continue to appropriate for themselves billions of pesos in pork barrel, much of which just go into their private pockets? Why will taxpayers be willing to pay more when the President submits to Congress a budget that assumes the hated pork barrel which is the top source of corruption in government? How can you make people pay taxes, taking from their hard-earned money that is not even enough for their daily needs, when billions of those taxes would just be squandered as confidential or intelligence funds, representation expenses or travel expenses, vehicle or gasoline allowances, and so pay the drivers, bodyguards and other operators of public vehicles? How can you make people agree to put more money in government officials and employees will be paid less than for working only four days?

The President says all must help and make sacrifices to hail the government out of its fiscal problems. But sacrifice is not a one-way street. Everybody must make the sacrifice, the government as well as the people—in fact, the government more so than the people because it was the government that put us in this predicament.

The government must first show that it can cut its own expenses before it can ask the people to sacrifice and pay more. If the President had ordered the pork barrel allocations and if Congress had cut the allocations of profligate public officials, then the public would be willing to make its own sacrifice. This has not the UP 11 defense.

In the first place, our tax system is regressive, not progressive. Instead of squeezing the ordinary people more, the corporate income tax should be increased. That it had been reduced long ago from 35 percent to a maximum of only 30 percent. The cabinet worker pays the same maximum income tax as the richest corporation making billions in profits, the same as the super-rich of the Philippines whose riches are equal to the combined wealth of those in Asia. Other countries have much higher maximum corporate income tax, why not us? Why did the UP 11 not say this?

The telecommunication companies are now the highest earning corporations in the Philippines, grossing billions of pesos. Miguel Cuepo, retired general, is for life. I, for, all of them put together, pay less taxes than only one cigarette company, Fortune Tobacco.

Taxing should be varied, to be taken from the take of the phone firms, not from the people. As the earning capacity of the people increases, there is a lot of room for revenues for the government. That would also discourage much of the useless texting going on now. Why does Congress refuse to do that? Besides, the phone firms take advantage of their subscribers, charging them for a whole minute even if they use only 30 seconds, charging them for one letter even if only one or two letters, such as "k" or "ok," or having a PIN code automatically capture letters dropped even if it is not used, with bigger bonds requiring automatically in progressively larger days. Why did the UP 11 not say that?

Rote-learning in schools: Asia's handicap

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

THE FILIPINO knack for diplomacy is in full blossom once again in this season of school graduations. We are not alone. My own informal survey of honors students in the Philippines and other Asian cultures delights in these purely inane proofs of erudition. Perhaps, that can of us explain why study after study has shown that Asian students score better than American kids in standardized tests. But I have always doubted whether it is true that the Asian kid is smarter. If we're so bright, how come they're richer and seem to have more fun in life, and how come there's the world's only remaining superpower?

I often draw on this endless font of learning to child's conjectural voice asking, "Nanay/tatay, pag isang A ang nakuha mo?" I have never been patient enough to listen to the rest of the ad to find out what it is selling, but it affirms what I have long suspected: that for the Filipino child, schoolwork is memory work. When my kids were younger, I was aghast to discover how much memorizing they had to do in school. It felt as if bright young minds capable of dreaming in vibrant colors were being bamboozled and forced to fit into an intellectual black hole that sucked all life out of them. Even the math that I found so fascinating as a kid was reduced to a genius of memorizing: in the first grade, we, of, say, adding incomparable fractions that find the least common denominator; second, third, etc., instead of being a fun game played in the abstract world of numbers unconstrained by reality.

For Filipinos, as for many Asians, learning is about storing knowledge in the brain, not about stabbing new skills or imagining new ways to look at the world. But Einstein says, "Imagination is more important than knowledge" and, Chase Jarvis advised, you mustn't let your education get in the way of learning. Here in the Philippines, we go for what is tangible, so to speak, something that can be labeled, something that can be recorded in a diploma. I have heard it said that creativity in far too many[illegible] to be valued, and far too much a luxury for a poor country like ours, which must focus on more basic needs. Well, sadly, the result is that we graduate smart alecks who can be total losers in practical life, but are total superstars when it comes to regurgitating facts and data in textbook.

The foreign biographer of a Philippine president once wrote this of "his subject": "His greatest asset educationally was a formidable memory. His masters, from his earliest grades, was to read the textbook ... memorize it, and recite back its contents by rote all year ..."

The biographer continues: "The Philippine educational system encourages this exercise. ... The premium is upon memory ... because of their lack of [textbooks], in the public schools of old, there was usually only one copy of the book for the whole class, which the teacher would read aloud to the students, who then wrote on the blackboard for all to copy, and the entry had to be memorized while the class of the day was called in the town gazette."

That reverence for rote-memory has no place in the modern world. Today, entire shelves of the library can be stored in one CD, which can be copied cheaply in another P50 CD. So why memorize the textbooks deserves to be exalted in more than the tribute in "Nipley's Believe it or Not," when could write more telephone directories. The next time someone tells you he can recite the entire Revised Penal Code verbatim, buy his brain for P10, and with the change, erase a big blue volume named Civil Code (and another pink one, Rules with P50 worth of lard).

We, the top public, are equally guilty. We are thrilled when speakers talk jargon instead of actually explaining to us, hapless hill, how that gobbledygook from the books can apply to life. When talking to trained professionals, the less we understand, the more we are impressed.

Another explanation is the Asian's lingering respect for the Mandarin tradition of Dynasty, and the strict system of imperial examinations. Transplanted into today's competitive world, children from struggling families need the hard evidence of talent and achievement in order to compete in the few available avenues for improving one's life. The pedigreed, those from the old families, all they need are their family names. The rest of us with obscure names, we have to work our butts off, and having fancy diplomas certainly eases the way.

How much longer can the Asian obsession for diplomas and exams survive the competition brought about by globalization? Will we have innovation and imagination in America and Europe, and inventive memorizers in Asia? Surprises, indeed! The "memorized" mental model? Or should it? we in Asia start aspiring, ambitioning, for grander things? We, Filipinos, have a long way to go, considering that the Dictionary can produce a state-of-the-art Mercedes-Benz in a single day—from the design of the soup down to the assembly line—yet it will take our Land Transportation Office more than a month just to get a plate number for that car.

Diploma fixation and the enormous brain bucket a culture lacking confidence outside, a culture that locates the factual trappings of learning rather than for actual competence in work. This has fueled a whole explosion of degree-based requirements—where outfit police are required to have college degrees that will barely help them execute their duties (and badly help them they do), and where children drawn by human-size arborescent in their lives are precisely those smart already kids who memorized everything the teacher said.

* * *

Comments to rmd@phily.edu.ph

An unsettling trend

ANALYSIS

Amanda Doremus

JOB PRESIDENT Mongrad Avenue, she wasn't quite thing about the March outing of Palo Alto is that it shows a continuation of a downward trend in her public approval rating, reaching October last year. The trend is more significant and unsettling than the plunge in her rating—38 percent, the lowest point she recorded in the poll, a drop after the fall of President Saddam in January 2003. Her election last May, which legislature her government's take on electoral measures, did not seem to help her in this aspect.

According to Palo Alto, her March ratings of 38 percent fell from 42 percent in December and from 53 percent in June last year. The danger about this decline is that it puts pressure on the administration—as president a dramatic reverse measure would increase the deficit. Her budget, put into a free fall into a dangerous potential for worsening political instability. Executive Secretary Ed. Andrés Emilio had better offer something more to something than the statement that the slump was "expected." And the fact that Mongrad Road was shorter it is losing out in and is eluding the fact down in the crisis—there use for an error response than going into panic—the survey finding rates in a bad time just as the administration is struggling to get its budget passed. According to Mongrad's colleagues bill, the President's last hope is raising significant revenue for capital expenditures.

True, as Ferreira said, governing is matter is not a matter of popularity and the government is not elected by opinion polls. However, the March survey results reveal a hardening of internal discontent that could easily weaken the hands of the administration in pushing tough fiscal reforms which require further belt-tightening from the people.

It will be useful to identify the historic that triggered the plunge in the President's approval rating. It only to know where relief measures should be targeted.

The respondents gave the President a failing mark on 11 of 14 national issues, and she received worse off now than last year, and 68 percent thought that the national quality of life deteriorated over the past 12 months.

But the picture is not entirely bleak for the administration. A redeeming survey finding shows that there are fewer Filipinos pessimistic about the state of their situation now than there were in October.

The decline in the number of people who are pessimistic about the national situation could have been caused by the November money-spreading. But isolated economic performances last year and the corresponding of the year ("this quarter"), according to Pulse Asia. This finding lends credence to the administration's arguments that an improvement of the economic growth rate would translate to improvements. Aside from which the most pressing issue—such as inflation—could be resolved.

But government economists linked the problem to rising inflation. Fernando Ayalde, dean of the School of Economics, pointed out that "the benefits of economic growth do not really trickle down as much as they should."

Gil L. Tornes, of the University of Asia and the Pacific, called for the entire Cabinet "to focus" for this problem as it largely due to the high cost of consumer goods plus high utility costs." Pulse Asia found that although 63 percent of Filipinos believed that the economic quality of life had worsened in the last year, the figure registered an improvement of one year's respondents—down from 79 percent in October. But, however, dent the prospects of further oil price hikes, which could fuel more increases in the prices of other basic consumer goods.

Benjamin Diokno, an economist who is with the University of the Philippines, disconnected the finding of Pulse Asia on the levels of pessimism as "inconsistent" with the 6.1 growth reported last year. "If we grow by so much then why do people remain unhappy?" he asked.

Visit to Silay

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THOUGH I came back several the end of March, Mother's Hillside, it was hard on that there was still time to take part in one last Mother's Hands activity, which is why I found myself Tuesday flying to Bacolod and thence to Silay City to take part in the "culminating" activity.

I went on the invitation of Miss Guimelse Marie Jose Bordiar Castro, a friend and sister in Filipino for many years. And as Mayor Carlo Lacson (Mother's Hands Volunteers), who has been involved with such projects ever since that year with Mario Jose, as chief of the committee on women and family, as he adds.

The events started with a "Women's Walk," with the mayor leading the pack of city employees taking part, dressed in color-coded T-shirts. They promptly earned quite a temperature as the city's mercenaries, as much by their booming enthusiasm as by their numbers. Then it was time for the awards to be distributed about. One of the highlights of the program was the unveiling of the "foot plaques" and symbolized of the Silay Women's Center, planned for completion within the year. A happy coincidence that the center will be built on the lot where the old city hall was located. Also, the Silay Women's Center will be administered through Alumni? Pinay were available for use in gender and development projects. Also a review of the Women's Code of Silay, which will concentrate on Gender Sensitivity and Gender and Development, participated in by representatives of barangay councils and by various city departments.

There's more, it seems. Also launched were orders of property protection for women victims of rape and family including a "bounty for the Outstanding Women in Community Development," whose names as honor community leaders who have made significant contributions to their neighborhoods; and the award for "Best GAD Practices," which is meant to encourage more creativity in the planning of community projects on gender issues.

* * *

BUT the best part of the program was still to come. This was the competition among the various barangays in dance performances encouraging "composed" of original songs on this year's Women's Day theme of recognizing the role of women in nation building: "Inclusive, Inc." original rhyming poems very similar to the "Isinglaman" – just this.

The "composers" and "librettists" themselves the community women's rare source of creativity, displaying flashes of humor as well as insight into the condition of women – or as Jane as much as my attending of the Bangga Women and members and ladies.

Even richer and more inspiring were the skits, all of which were based on real-life events. The most time I harangued with friends finds the gumption to turn her abusive husband before the authorities and finds herself frustrated at every turn; community women decide to pool their resources to come to the aid of a woman with an irresponsible mother-in-law; a mother-in-law finds herself in trouble for her husband's abusive behavior until her own daughter convinces her to right back. Go tie child!

The skits "entertained," we just because they were also educational could not. Gone are the days of composing politics after the fact in her bid for mayor, but was unable to resist the call of serving her hometown and so decided to run for councilor in last year's elections. Though she and Mario Jose are on opposite sides of the political fence this time (Mario Jose was in Lindo's lineup of councilors during Lindo's successful bid), Lindo said that when it comes to advocating for women's issues, all the women in the council line stood in OK representative Carmelita Lindonas) are united and empowering with each other.

Mayor Carlson, Vice Mayor Joe Advincula and other members of the Silay Sangguniang Panlungsod are to be lauded for their efforts. The challenge is to plant their plans for "after Advincula calls" the structure proud city of Silay?

There's a possibility, though, that Silay might soon succumb to replication as a small and prosperous city with a rich heritage that is determined to preserved Spanish- and American-era houses and buildings, the luscious home-made mayor sweets and candies, as well as the home of "El Ideal" – the factory that produces such "Negrense" treats as bacolod, Amoretes, and guapple pie.

* * *

SILAY is the site of the proposed provincial airport, which is being constructed with the use of Japanese yen loans. It's underway.

Amusing controversy mainly because it would require clearing shanties in the Bacolod airport, the new airport promises to bring in more investments and business opportunities to the city, though it could also potentially destroy the "manners" of Silay if airports featured development is not carefully planned and regulated. Will the city's administration clear this early, Mayor Gamboa? Also, he already engaged the services of a noted urban planner, Nathaniel von Einsiedel, whose wife hails from Silay, to prepare a growth and development plan to help guide the development and expansion of sudden growth spurred by the airport.

One last praiseworthy note on my visit to Silay: Participating in the Women's Month closing event was Silay's remarkable centenarian Isabel Lopez Jalandoni, known to their city residents as being the reigning NSCB 1% champion. Doña Isabel performed for elementary and high school audiences who proved that aside from calories, Silay succinctly boasts of talented youth.

Summers to remember

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

SUMMERS for the young are mainly for the unstated grace to the kids shouldn't mean sacrificing the needs of the elderly especially those around health.

Ironically, the elderly are more vulnerable to the many health problems we have in the country—infection as well as non-infectious (e.g., accidents). And when a health problem strikes, they suffer more and face more dire consequences. Simple misfortunes ailments give way to pneumonia, diarrhea to kidney failure.

I have just down notes throughout about the elderly's health concerns and what we can do to deal with these issues this summer.

Mind-body patient

We first about the elderly's dietary restrictions, trying to figure out how sugar, low-salt, low-cholesterol, low-uric-acid intake. That's all well and good, but we might forget that the food also has to be safe from poisons and bacteria.

I recall my father's dietary restrictions after the Tasbar spoiled spaghetti incident and by coincidence, they were also dieting against diabetes. Fortunately, I was the first cooking in and limited-early I could still is bad spoiled. It warned me my mother had bought the fish earlier than she and it had turned bad after leaving the fish out. Also in the hot and humid summer.

It's tempting for me to throw up to you order food from outside, but we have to keep reminding the elderly about the risks with such food, they tend to consume more of the unhealthy stuff (salt, sugar, etc.) and are more prone to spoilage.

Of course, home-cooked meals aren't usually safe either. Everyone in the household should be reminded about proper storage of food, including attention to expiration dates.

The risks of food-poisoning are greater with the elderly because age lessens their senses of taste and smell. Again, avoid the help of their companions or caregivers at home to be more alert about sensing food, whether home-cooked or bought from outside.

Senior moments

The elderly's "senior moments"—lapses in memory—does affect food safety. I actually pity the elderly cousin who called the poison-control center because he didn't know whether the bottle he had consumed contains Raid with pesticides it was more of an obsessive sentiment with the problems. Similar accidents could happen in our households as do check where food items are placed—for example stored in Coke bottles can end up being mistaken for cooking oil—and remind the elderly and their caregivers to be more conscious about the risks.

The senior moments can also be dangerous in the way they affect the elderly's use of medicines. The elderly are notorious for their big poison lipstick and medicines. I help them run down on the medicines, and with what's left—throw out the expired ones. Also, I remind them to keep the meds in their respective duty don't under or overdose. There are all kinds of pillboxes now on the market, with the day of the week marked on each little compartment to help Lolo and Lola remember if they've taken the day's medicine.

If the memory loss is more serious, you will need the help of a health professional. There are many more available, look for other ways to avoid reminders. In Metro, some hospitals now send out text messages to remind the elderly when a medicine is due. I think there now has a way of programming messages to be sent out at specific times.

If you have other tips for the summer's, you may want to post "shiny" all over the house, for example, "Turn off the gas after cooking" one a stove. If your relative is prone to wandering off, make sure they always have safe, green identification sewn into their clothing, a kind of "Home sweet to..." bracelet in case they're picked up by Good Samaritans (and not kidnappers). If stressed by you, two best friends since how wandering Alzheimer whenever you see such incidents in complex strangers.)

Again, remember the risks are greater during the summer. The best is as problematic at home, they're quick to defenses as studies may they're taking enough water and that you have enough fiber. Lastly, remember, even if they do manage all, the love will be more dangerous than members and tidtuppers.

Exercising may depression

Be aided the temptation to acquiesce the elderly at home. Precisely because summer is too much for the young, the elderly may tend to get depressed...a sometimes many, much's buy is kept in their rooms.

Accept the young to take Lolo and Lola out for exercise, from the daubbed sun and should have some exercise. There are many scientific studies demonstrating how exercise can relieve mild to moderate cases of anxiety, heart disease, high blood pressure, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and, of course, obesity. Besides improving physical health, exercise does wonders for mental health problems, with studies showing they are as good, sometimes even better (because of fewer side effects) than medicines for mild to moderate depression.

We know that physical activity usually creates a "high," making us feel good. Exercise triggers the release of chemicals called endorphins, which can block pain, reduce stress, enhance the immune system and, some claim, even slow down the aging process.

Just some of the mental effects don't come about instantly. Especially while done in groups, exercise helps build up social networks and support, as well as self-esteem and self-efficacy. Ballroom dancing does seem as exercise and isn't not surprising that it's so popular with the elderly, especially with the women. (But yes, the seniors can be pushed to strange contortions.)

Young for the old

If the kids complain that summer's boring, find ways to mobilize them to help out with Lola and Lolo, with fund preparations, taking their medicines and the many other chores at home.

Maybe they're "friends or Lola" ask are wonderful, showing how Pilipinos do encourage our Lolas to look good, feel good. When your kids need to go to the hairdresser, gently suggest they might want to take Lola (yes, Lolas need to feel good, too) or Lolo.

If your kids flew to the point every time Lola requests her life story for the umpteenth time, encourage them to go the extra mile or videotape or tape-record the stories (e.g., they can say, "Lo, we have it. Why don't I replay it for you?"

Shrewdness have the kids run through old photos with their grandparents and come up with a digital scrapbook—have them scan the photos and create slide shows on the computer, complete with a soundtrack where Lolo and Lola explain the pictures.

Seriously, your own grandchildren and great-grandchildren will appreciate all those digital memorabilia memory or valuable heirlooms, stories from Lolo and Lola's own youth, and all of the many happy summers where young and old found time together.

Comments are welcome at mtan@philstar.com.

Best place for practice driving

I WAS wondering my son playing a computer game where he was a car driver maneuvering through roads and different situations. I asked him if the game has helped him become a better road driver. He just got his license. I replied that it was the other way around. So said that driving through the streets of Tarlac, where traffic regulations are ignored and safety measures abound, has helped him become better at his computer game.

Indeed, what would be a better place to hone your driving skills than in Tarlac where everyday drivers enter one-way streets? Or where jeeps and tricycles load and unload passengers in the middle of a busy road how to use, or sudden to swerve to the right, anticipating a passenger?

It's in Tarlac where the rookie ain't changed the lane—for, without warning, as a stretch of road may be one-way today and two-way tomorrow. It's also in Tarlac where you never know if the traffic light is functioning or not. There are days when Tarlac ain't the slowest city in certain hours, but it's a driver's game—and prizes go to what those hours are. Racing? Wet, mud dash, where wrecks and "bulagtig" instantly ply the highways without any lights. Isn't that supposed to be illegal?

But in Tarlac, legality is a personal point of view. In Tarlac, the streets are virtual obstacle courses, with kids darting across the streets, buses parked on narrow roads which are structures in potholes and bumps and, yes, people piloting mangoes in the middle of the road! Truly, Tarlac can be measured as an excellent place to practice driving, less for modern cowards.

Now, if only taking road courses before being issued a license were actually implemented, Tarlac would be "the place." But then, again, that would lessen the lucrative incentives in Tarlac. So, where could kids practice so they could excel in computer driving games?

—DENIS E. SOLSA,
1 Ilanda Street, Tarlac City

Conquer lies with truth

THE PHILIPPINE Center of International PEN stood with extreme concern the attempts by the Macapagal-Arroyo Commission and the Supreme Court to gag press freedom in the country by denying airtime to some critics of the current government.

We wish to remind those two bodies that Jose Rizal was exonerated by the Spanish authorities because he was falsely accused of being an enemy and revolutionary. History applies once accused by the colonial tribunal of masterminding the uprising bombing of Plaza Miranda. Governments have historically attacked anti-government leaders by labeling them as terrorists and criminals.

We are not saying that we agree with what the New People's Army, the Abu Sayaf and other anti-government groups are saying. But because we still believe that our country is a democratic, we still fight for their right to express their views.

We wish to remind President Macapagal-Arroyo that, were it not for the loud voices of the people against Marcos and Joseph Estrada, she would not be in Malacañang today. We call on her to stop the FIC campaign to keep dissidents from expressing known leaders of anti-government groups. We urge the members of the GRP to experiment their officers and to bring the organization back to what it is supposed to do, namely, to protect the outside, considerate of members of any and all views on any subject.

The call to fight falsehood is through truth, not through repression.

—DR. ELEANOR R. ORTEGA-SOLAS
of Philippine PEN (Manuscripts), National secretary,
Philippine Center of International PEN, 3233 Pedro Guevara, Ermita, Manila

Wrong focus

FORTUNE magazine recently came up with the list of the 500 most wealthy persons in the world, among them are three Filipinos. Have we ever heard? Not really. We have known all along that our country is the most corrupt. We are rich in natural resources, we are rich in entrepreneurial skills and in many other sources of wealth.

So why are some legislators fighting tooth and nail trying to emphasize on what we need to raise the P175 on the ground that it is the only way to alleviate poverty? Come on! It is time to wake up!

The reason why many people are poor is that wealth in the Philippines is not properly managed and not spread out, and what is benefits just a few but on the many. Now is a problem of management, not of population control.

Why is our government on favor of us reducing population, you know the other way when it comes to fighting corruption, improving education, developing the countryside so people are not forced to seek work in Metro Manila and dwell on already overcrowded metropolis?

So the efforts to reduce population are an excuse to cover up government's failure to solve the problem of poverty?

—L. SAEDE,
Jaminlaw, New Frontier, Q.C.

Lesson from Camp Bagong Diwa

THE INQUIRER editorial on the Bicutan jail break says it all. (FYI, 3/16/05) Indeed, the prisoners succeeded in escaping trial. At the same time, their death provided a great relief for those who remember the sins they feared he committing crimes. The government lost one more opportunity to know more about the mind of gangs.

The rate of assault by the government in the handling of the "crime" was, indeed, questionable. There was no homage to speak of. What inspirations were the police authorities talking about when the prisoners being asked to exchange gunfire with the police in their respective cells? A simple order to execute the area would have solved the problem. If no one had followed, the normal procedure of cutting electricity and water, including the mandatory padlock, leg of the area, could have been ordered.

Granted the inmates were able to grab firearms, still it would not have taken long for hunger and the suspicion to overwhelm them inside their small jail cell. In a day or two, the guns in their possession would have climbed and caused like bread for bloodshed. Pure psychology.

But that is not the way we seem to administer criminal justice here, especially on the matters related to corruption. The government does not even know what prisoners are enemies who should be punished with no more privileges. If this is the case, let's do away with our jails and prisons. Why waste time and funds for prisoners if we can just shoot them down?

There is a lesson to be learned here. Instead of the Senate blue ribbon's Department of Corrections to manage and administer all detention and correctional facilities in the country under the criminal, proper mandates not be applied, discipline promoted and competence developed.

—FELIX ESEBIO,
professor,
Pamantasang Lungsod ng Muntinlupa,
felixesebio@yahoo.com

Adan can't be faulted

MAJ. Gen. Edilberto Adan may be faulted for his statement that sounds like a veiled form of media censorship, but his concern is legitimate. It is a task as the chief of Intelligence to uphold the security. In my mind, the point Adan tried to make is this: In giving us, print and viewing space or air time, the terrorists and their accused cannot.

In the light of all these passing facts, I still have much trust in the Philippine press. I know that print may change the chief from the grade—sort of written Adan's statement.

—ROMEL PERLAS (INQ),
information officer I,
Philippine Information Agency (PIA)-Manila City, Southern Luzon Area Coordinating Center (SLCC), Capitol Grounds, Manila City

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On Sen. Loi Ejercito's clash with US immigration

I AM appalled at how our country's treasured trade has fallen. I've been living in the United States for the past nine years, always hoping that our beloved country will be regarded highly once again.

Unfortunately our government fail to show enforcement to many overseas Filipinos because of politicos and stupidity. The "grave and honorable" Italian statesmen Loi Ejercito and some colleagues of her made an issue out of her "encounter" with airport security at the United States.

Last I heard, Sec. Franklin Drilon stated that an airport is located in commercial USA, and Loi is certainly not a member of the US Senate. So what if she got treated like any other citizen in the United States? She certainly is not a US citizen either!

That's why a lot of Filipinos working in US airports, I find it rather difficult to believe that an Filipino working at the San Francisco International Airport had heard about these issues between their respective supervisors.

What really irritates is that our own immigration officials chose to join the circus by thinking a responsible US diplomat who was in Manila for a conference, he didn't have any intention of staying in Manila, but took at least an hour and half flight to Guam for another conference. Is that a crime?

—Alvin Cortez, 116 E. Arbor Rd. Bldg., 1300 Rm. 232, Edwards AFB, CA

* * *

This has reference to the news report about the statement given by a US homeland Security operative to Sen. Loi Ejercito. Although Senator Ejercito is the wife of retired President Joseph Estrada, still she deserves respect, since she is a representative of the Philippine people.

I am just wondering why the Philippine Senate did not do anything to express its sense of collective outrage over the insulting, racial-epithet remark if the United States can do this to one of our senators, how much more to ordinary Filipinos?—Arnel Cruzana-Serrano, Ortigas, Pasig City

* * *

I don't blame the US immigration officials for doing their job. Here in the Philippines, our politicians breeze through all the rules—for example, through deceptions and traffic, in immorales with street blocking. Our politicians don't know what an ordinary Filipino goes through when he or she travels. Have you ever been asked by a Filipino immigration official for "show money"? If you're Filipino and you're traveling to, say, Bangkok on a visa, our officials would ask you how much money you have. I wonder if these foreigners would do to our politicians?

The last time a Filipino official's 28kg. Gov. Carlos Garcia family traveled to the United States, it was caught with $100,000 (unreported). So can we blame the US immigration officials for doing their job? Remember, our country is the second most corrupt country in Southeast Asia.

Before Senator Ejercito Presidents Frank Delano and Rep. Rufio Gulow start sounding about how the United States doesn't give them more respect, they would do well to bear in mind that the United States is not like our country where people wait on their hand and foot.—Mark Ulat, Makati City

* * *

The detention of Sen. Loi Ejercito will more about Dept's personality. Perhaps, if she just answered politely and directly, it wouldn't have caused us so much.—Gisha Santiago, Bulacan

Voices on INQ7.net

InqBox Question of the Week

Do you believe the 4-day workweek program of the government will result in savings in electricity and fuel consumption?

Answers will be published in Tuesday's InqBox, and sent to you at "Inquirer Mail"

Across the NATION

EU pins hopes on MILF peace talks

A SOLDIER uses his radio as they secure a captured camp of the Abu Sayyaf in Indanan, Jolo. Peace in Mindanao remains elusive despite continuing talks between the government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

DAVAO CITY—The European Union is pinning its hopes on the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to carry out more peace and development projects in Mindanao.

Tim Sweeney-Nash Bon, head of operations of the EU delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines, said Mindanao has been among the EU's priority areas in the country, but the European Commission to the Philippines is interested in the peace process to determine how they can move it ahead, he said.

"The more that there is conflict in Mindanao, the more that it is necessary for the European development assistance to come in," he told the members of the board in Davao City on EU funding opportunities for development projects in the country.

According to him, EU's grant assistance to Mindanao ran to a total of $100 million euros, or an equivalent of P310 million, in 2004 alone. Most of these projects were geared mainly to Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte for aid to people affected by armed conflict. Grant beneficiaries included the Catholic Disaster Response Center (CDRC) and the United Nations Interim Development project for peace.

Such projects were trying to integrate people displaced by the armed conflict back to their communities.

But Bon said most of the proposals submitted by Mindanao in the previous years failed to meet the EC requirements and were turned down. However, the quality of the proposals has so far improved this year, brightening the prospects of more Mindanao NGO and GO projects that will be approved for EU funding this year.

The Davao information session was the fifth launched by the EU delegation across the country to encourage non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, non-profit organizations and local government units to avail themselves of existing funding opportunities from the European Commission, by giving them ideas how to access these funds.

Project projects include those that involve economic empowerment, the strengthening of civil society, democracy and human rights, development and rehabilitation, decentralization, gender and health, environment and energy, higher education and research.

Each NGO can avail itself of grants amounting to roughly P1 million to P30 million.

The European aid also seeks to help Filipino workers, domestics (known as) and Arab Muslims, PW Mindanao Bureau

Mining firm bent on evicting 2,000 ex-workers

MAGSO CITY—Philex Mining Corp. has given some 2,000 of its former workers from 21 days to the end of April to move out of their mining camp in Benguet, after they failed to obtain a court order restraining the company from shutting down operations.

More than 2,000 unmarried employees, their families, as well as store owners and jeepney drivers of the Barangay Balacbac-Cruz in Tuba and Itogon towns, have asked for a restraining order to stop the company from shutting down operations.

Lawyer Eduardo Atienza, Philex counsel, said a hearing could be held the first week of April, maybe on the 15th or towards the end of the month. Philex spends P5 million on security per month and P2 million on water just to keep the camp running and we can no longer afford it," he said.

But Atienza said the workers have asked for a two-year stay, and a waiver on their children's right to the St. Louis El University and Trinity School here, which Philex administers.

He said the workers are willing to pay their own way through the two years, including tuition and other school fees now that they can no longer be subsidized by the firm.

But the workers refused to enter the mediation proceedings, saying the company is only trying to delay the case.

Philex first incurred the ire of the board when it refused to enter the workers' children in 2003 and 2004.

In an earlier interview, Eulalio Austin, Philex vice president for operations, said the firm could no longer afford the overhead expenses required to host workers to accommodate the dependents of former employees.

Austin's again issued a memorandum banning the children of the former workers from enrolling for the 2005 school years, citing the same reasons.

The board is looking into the first-ever auction of power and water services to some 106 former employees at the Naval Camp early this year, Vincent Galvez, PDI North Luzon Bureau

3 Japanese lead bike for peace, justice

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Six ex-Javelins, three Japanese and seven Filipino peace activists will resume beginning Thursday the 104-km route of the infamous 1942 Death March from Mariveles, Bataan, to Capas, Tarlac.

Pedaling side-by-side, the activists' ranks will include a veteran for Filipino zombie victims and World War II survivors, and the reinvention of an "outlaw" trade deal between their countries, according to the event's organizer, the Bataan para sa Pandarayang Demokrasya.

Ichiro Hirata, Satomi Hosoi and Shigenobu Sadama joined the Bataanpeace council on Wednesday en route to Mariveles, the site of Eldemarie Diez Zoco.

Sixty-three years ago, 200,000 Filipinos and American soldiers were forced to walk from Mariveles to Capas. Almost half of them died of hunger, fatigue and repeated assaults. Thousands more died at the Camp O'Donnel in Capas.

The three Japanese have been peace pilgrims in the Philippines since 1995. They belong to the Bantaama Peace Cycle Network, one of the biggest and most active peace-advocacy groups in Japan.

"A time for healing and action towards genuine world peace," was the theme they handed out customers as their 2-km journey passed this city.

According to Hirata, peace will remain "elusive" to zombie victims and their relatives, most of the twilight of their years, even after World War II ended six decades ago.

This was because "economic and political aggression by the United States and Japan have replaced military wars," he said.

Hosoi said: "We, as enlightened Japanese people, are genuinely sorry for the atrocities committed by our ancestors in the Philippines [during the war. This year's activity seeks not only to remember the atrocities of World War II but also to campaign to work towards peace for the lingering sufferings of survivors of the war."

He said he will relay Bantaama's apology to war veterans and their families they will meet in at least eight stopovers.

Bishop Lotus—grandmother who is raising girls and adults were sexually and physically abused by Japanese soldiers in Mapanique in Candaba, Pampanga, in 1944—now the bikers off from Manila when the six-day journey to the Central Luzon provinces began. The cycling event will cover Bataan, Pampanga and Tarlac.

"The trauma, the humiliation and the pain do not make us obey peacefully," told Lito Banaya, 68.

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

TERROR BOAT
Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza (right), chief of the Southern Command, and Commodore Rufino Lopez, Scottsville Philippine naval chief, inspect a speedboat soldiers seized from suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf in Zamboanga.

New head of Leyte water firm named

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—The impasse at the Leyte Metropolitan Water District (LMWD) ended on Wednesday when Leyte Gov. Jerdan Petilla named a new general manager of the water firm.

Petilla designated engineer Rogelio Daneria, assistant manager of the LMWD, as officer-in-charge, replacing embattled Rosella Feliciano, in a bid to end the conflict at the LMWD.

"We are hopeful that everything will now return to normal at the LMWD. Our main objective in naming engineer Daneria to be the officer-in-charge is to restore the services rendered by LMWD to consumers uninterrupted," Petilla told the Inquirer.

Under the LMWD charter, the governor has the authority to name the general manager and the five members of the board of directors of the water firm, the biggest in Eastern Visayas.

Jerry Peñaredo, secretary of the Leyte Metropolitan Water Employees Association (LMWEMA), welcomed Daneria's appointment and assured that the union members would cooperate with him.

"Our only demand was for Feliciano to step down as he was holding the post illegally," he said.

"We want to remain to work. We have been out of work for six months now and of course for the business operations of the LMWD to return to normal," he added.

The business operations of the LMWD had been paralyzed since Tuesday without about 50 LMWEMA members occupied the LMWD business office on Rizal Street here.

The union members invoked the Feb. 28 decision of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) that the appointment of Feliciano as LMWD general manager was without any legal basis because it did not pass and was unopposed by the committee.

The CSC maintained that all officers of the LMWD, including Feliciano, must pass through the commission, since the water district is a government-owned and -controlled corporation.

The union took the CSC decision to mean that Feliciano had no authority to continue as one of the members in October last year for holding a rally to press for their benefits.

The LMWEMA has 136 members out of the more than 500 personnel of the LMWD. The water firm has more than 35,000 consumers.

POLARIS: Arroyo renders full honors during his burial at the Marigape Cemetery in Marigape, Marinduque. Above, Sen. Sup PNP officials and the governor of the province pave tribute to Arroyo, praising him for sacrificing his life. But his family continues to grieve. While saying they appreciate the honors that Arroyo received, they were said that it had to be "this way."

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Cop who died at Bicutan jail siege buried a hero

MARINDUQUE Boston Sun.—The hero burial by the government side during the siege of the Bicutan jail on March 14 and 15 was hosted a hero on Wednesday at the Marigape Cemetery here.

Political leaders here blamed the 41-year-old PO2 Abel Peña Arroyo to his full military honors who was killed by his jealous brothers.

In a flying gesture, Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, presented Arroyo by mistake from PO1, others he died, to PO2.

Arroyo is a member of the Special Action Force which stormed the Bicutan jail after the hostage leaders, Commander Ramon and Shiloh, killed three jail guards and held nine prisoners on March 14.

"He and the others saved my life as it was. After us, they came and shot's others he died," Lomibao said in Boston.

Sacrifice

During necrological services at the Santa Maria town plaza, Gov. Jose "Chavit" Singson said the tragedy at the prison siege where 23 detainees, including leaders of the Abu Sayyaf, could have been worse if not for Arroyo's sacrifice.

Lomibao also said during the activities that it was an honor for the PNP that "a brother in arm would shed his own blood to an honorable death for the cause of the Filipino people."

"He died fighting the way he was trained to fight. His death is similar to losing one's son in defend our nation and homeland," Lomibao said.

The police gave a 21-gun salute at the service of more than 1,000 members of Arroyo's hometown in Sta. Maria attended the burial.

Gun salute

His father, Ambrosio, said that Abel, the youngest of his three children, already entered to be a police officer even when he was in high school.

"We are grateful that he made in personal lives like this way," the elder Arroyo said.

The siege of the Bicutan jail also led to the killings of the detained Abu Sayyaf leaders who were declared martyrs by their fellow terrorists.

Frank Cimatu and Lorenzo Rellon Jr., PDI Northern Luzon bureau

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GMA refuses to declare Mt. Province peace zone because of NPA threats

BAGUIO, Ifu. Province—President Macapagal-Arroyo said she is not in favor of declaring Mt. Province as a peace zone to avoid threats in the province as well as threatened by the communist New People's Army.

"Bagulo is a peace zone. There is still an NPA threat in other parts of Mt. Province," the President said during a press briefing last week.

In September 2003, former Benguet Governor Luisa Lawyer sought the help of Mrs. Arroyo in making the whole of Mt. Province a peace zone as residents of Barangays Mainit and Tadiean had been adversely affected by the military combat operations against NPA rebels reportedly operating in the area villagers.

Chavit said he was informed that the prolonged armed conflict between government troops and NPA rebels had economically disheartened them.

But Mr. Arroyo expressed willingness in maintaining Baguio as a peace zone.

A local government official said the President's non-declaration of the whole province as a peace zone should not elaborate the communists clamoring for peace.

He said the unarmed combatants should decide if they wanted to establish the province as a peace zone because they were the ones affected by the shadow becomes the military and the NPA.

"If they (communists) feel that they have the capability to declare the whole province as a peace zone then they can do that. And those rebels who earlier proposed to the province about the peace zone have already expressed that it is already off. The important thing is they have the capacity to declare," the official told the Inquirer.

Mt. Province Gov. Maximo Dalog said the province was happy that Mr. Arroyo had recognized that Bagulo was functioning as a peace zone.

But Dalog said he hoped certain villages in the towns of Bontoc, Barlig and Sadsac—the main stakeholders of the proposal—could be declared as peace zones.

"The conflict between the military and the NPA is so intense that we need to do something drastic. But I hope we can have a dialogue between these two succeeding parties to prevent more fighting," Dalog said.

In 2003, villages of Mt. Province clamored for the declaration of the whole province as a peace zone after clashes between the military and the NPA claimed 30 lives.

Andy Jesus Claver, the dialogue was initiated by former Governor Thomas Killip of Bagulo and Bontoc/Ifu People of Barlenga Units and Vice Gov. Anthony Maulen.

During the dialogue, Killip shared the experience of Bagulo during its turbulent years in the 1980s and early 1990s when many residents fled because of the incessant fighting between government soldiers and NPA rebels.

As a peace zone, Bagulo does not allow combatants from both groups to enter the town and fight each other. Reuters Cabuen, PDI Northern Luzon bureau

ARMM gov defends education official

COTABATO CITY—Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao defended an education official in the region, who is among those blamed for unqualified government insurance premiums.

Hataman said the performance of the officials and late payment of teachers to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) was not the fault of Lumbatan Ginebra, acting secretary of the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DepEd-ARMM).

"Secretary Ginebra (DepEd official) has the different that you considered best," Hataman said.

But records from the GSIS have indicated that the DepEd-ARMM has yet to remit its premium deductions from teachers since Ginebra assumed office in May last year.

Further records of the year from all ARMM Gov. Gov. Mahid Mutilan when he was last lost in the Lanao del Sur gubernatorial race in the May 2004 elections.

GSIS records also showed that under Mutilan's tenure as DepEd secretary, the ARMM failed to remit over P200 million in teachers' premium deductions to the GSIS.

In Manila, public schoolteachers claimed that the ARMM government has not only failed to remit their GSIS premiums but also those regarding contributions and their Philippine Public School Teachers Association (PTCEA) dues.

Edgar Sapi, administrative officer at the DepEd-Basilan, said the non-remittance of their premiums and dues started in October 2004.

"We already sought legal action, because our officials refused to give clear and direct answers," Sapi said.

He said that during a dialogue with Gloria Itan Pabla, chief accountant of the DepEd Central Office and Edwin Romero, accountant of DepEd-Mindanao Mindanao, on right instructions were given to them to make their payments and that leave not been executed.

Sapi and Romero simply said that he would return the unremitted amount by June 30.

"That's not enough, we need an explanation as to why they did not remit our contributions since it was deducted from us every month," he said.

Leandro Dorado, president of the Basilan Teachers and Employees Association (BTEA), said that one of the main reasons of their protest is that they have not availed of any loan from the GSIS since.

She said they could not also depend on their salaries because of deduct.

Dorado said that when the deeds arise, some teachers could also not enough to because the banks would refuse to lend them.

"Some of our members' pay checks are borrowing checks," she said. Sarah Macalanu and Aris Ilagan, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil told reporters that no "specific threat" had come from any "threat group," but stood on append post today stated at the New Peoples army to help ensure a peaceful assembly and thereby prove the communist-led group's positions.

"Let this be an undertaking that will make us proud to be Filipinos," Bataoil said. "The NPAs, for example, say they are patriots. This is a case for them to prove their being Filipinos. If this turns out to be a successful activity, it will be part of Filipino pride."

No bail for suspect

But Ramos said terror suspect Tyrone "Datu" Santos, who was jailed for alleged illegal possession of explosives, would pose a threat to the IPU assembly if he is allowed to post bail. (See story on Page A6.)

"He is a threat because he is part of the group that intended to bomb Metro Manila," the NCRPO chief claimed. "We would announce that (the group's members) are not backing out of their plan. They would still continue with it, so we should be watchful and alert to prevent their plan from happening."

Ramos said that even if Santos had posted bail, "we won't let him go that easily, we will place him under surveillance."

He took advantage of the occasion to push for the passage of an antiterror law, stating current laws were not equipped to handle terrorists or suspected terrorists.

"This should be a wake-up call for all of us," he said of Santos' ability to post bail. "This is an indication of the lack of an effective antiterrorist law. We are fighting terrorism using [only] the Revised Penal Code. That is why we can only charge terrorists with illegal possession of explosives or firearms."

Protests for Poe

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao called on supporters of the late Fernando Poe Jr. not to hold protest actions near the PICC on April 3-8.

"We have appealed to our people, be they with the opposition or otherwise, to consider that big event. Let us all go for one national spirit so that we would [look] good in the eyes of the world," he said.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, dismissed Poe's electoral protest as well as the appeal of his wife, Susan Roces, to reconsider the ruling.

Poe's supporters had reiterated quietly said they might have no fear of legal options and could take to the streets to express their disappointment.

Lomibao said that while he hoped no incidents during the IPU assembly would put the Philippines in a bad light, the PNP had prepared for protest actions.

"If they have permits, they'll be allowed [to hold a rally]. But then again they should not infringe on the rights of others," he said.

But Ramos said he would allow Poe's supporters to protest in the streets even without a permit "as long as it is within the bounds of law... no destruction of property, no injury to persons, and no disturbance or traffic."

If these requirements are met, Poe's supporters will be allowed to "exercise their freedom of assembly and right to speech," he said.

Maximum tolerance

Actually, the NPP is already preparing for massive protest actions by Poe's supporters, Senator Juan Ponce Enrile said.

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"We already have preparations for that," he said. "Our policy will still be maximum tolerance."

Ramos also said he did not think the outcome of the Arroyo administration could take advantage of the situation. "The people know. They are aware of the issues, and they're not that easily swayed."

He said the NCRPO had about 500 civil disturbance management members, who would be augmented by a contingent from the Armed Forces' PKR Command.

Bay area

The Coast Guard has beefed up security on Manila Bay because a number of the hotels where the delegates are billeted as well as certain tourist spots that they may visit are in the area.

"We have increased the number of patrols. There will stay throughout the duration of the assembly," said Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo, chief of the Coast Guard's NCR office.

Tamayo said the Coast Guard would also deploy quick-reaction teams and sea marshals in the bay area.

Despite the absence of currency threats, the PNP will strive to reassure the delegates onboard that they will meet the six-day IPU assembly, Bataoil said.

He called on the people to help in ensuring the event by informing police about any suspicious person or activity.

But again Senate security threats, he said, the people could help make sure that Metro Manila remained calm for the assembly by sending text messages to the PNP's 2920 number about piles of trash or traffic obstructions.

He said the PNP would inform the local government unit of the matter for quick action. With a report from Cecilia R. Salazar via

Pope's 'living will' wants life support to the end

Previous page

Thomas Reese S.J., editor of the Jesuit weekly America in New York. "It would be very difficult to unplug him if it came to that." Unceremonially popular in the United States, a living will is a written statement adults make to indicate whether they want doctors to take all means possible to keep them alive or life's end or to let them die if all hope of recovery seems lost.

As the Schiavo case shows, modern medicine can extend basic body functioning for years—a worrying prospect for the world's largest church if that means to elected for the leader is incapacitated indefinitely.

The Catholic Church has traditionally taught that doctors and families could end artificial life-extending measures in good conscience if a dying patient's prospects seemed hopeless.

Against 'culture of death'

John Paul, who has long railed against a "culture of death" he saw in abortion and artificial birth control, surprised moral theologians in a speech in March 2004 by insisting Catholics cannot no longer make such decisions even in extreme cases.

"The intrinsic value and the personal dignity of every human being does not change no matter what the concrete situation of his life," he told doctors and ethics experts attending a Rome conference about patients in a vegetative state.

"The administration of water and food, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act," he said. Denying them this treatment would amount to "euthanasia by omission." "Considerations about the 'quality of life,' often actually dictated by psychological, social and economic pressures, cannot take precedence over general principles," he said.

Theologians' dilemma

John Grabowski, associate professor of ethics at the Catholic University of America in Washington, said the Pope had made his views clear but "left many theologians researching their heads."

The problem was that he expressed this in a speech, not in a theological document that made it official Church policy.

"The Pope can say any number of things but he has to tell the bishops' conference when they have to change something," added Father James Keenan S.J., ethics professor at Boston College. "He hasn't done this."

As a result, he said, the US bishops' conference and the Catholic health association have not announced the more flexible earlier position even though many Catholic leaders support Schiavo's parents' demand to continue feeding her.

"We've spent centuries letting people figure out how they want to go to meet God, and now we have these fairly intrusive claims on a person," Keenan said in his critical assessment of how the Pope was changing Church teaching on the end of life.

"It doesn't seem good for the Church to embark here to do what the Pope himself is silling," he said. "The dying of a Pope should not set the agenda."

Reuters

US Supreme Court rejects appeals by Schiavo's parents

Previous page

parents, the Schindlers, said Wednesday. "I would say the bodes pretty stable compared to the last couple of days."

She has also seen legal steps. Gibbs said: "It appears that will be the last legal appeal at this time, unless something comes up."

The Schindlers maintained that while Schiavo was weak, her organs were functioning flawless. But she was responsive, "I'm telling that nobody throw in the towel as long as she's fighting, to keep fighting with her," Bob Schindler said.

George Felos, the attorney for Schiavo's husband, declined to comment.

Seven-year case

The case has spun seven years winding its way through the courts, with the Schindlers repeatedly on the losing end. The narrow 5-4 judgment on Wednesday declined to intervene for the sixth time. Hours earlier in a 9-2 ruling, the 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta declined to grant a new hearing in the case—the fourth time since last week that it ruled against the Schindlers.

Federal courts were given jurisdiction to review Schiavo's case after Republicans in Congress pushed through an unprecedented emergency legislation aimed at prolonging her life. But federal courts in three levels have rebuffed her parents.

The Schindlers had asked the 11th Circuit and the Supreme Court to order the reinsertion of their daughter's feeding tube immediately as a federal district court can review the case from its beginning, including whether there was enough "clear and convincing" evidence that she would have chosen to die in her current condition.

The Schindlers' motions includ all arguments that the 11th Circuit in its earlier rulings did not consider whether there was enough evidence that Terri Schiavo would have chosen to die.

Terri's choice?

But appeals court judges Stanley Birch and Charles R. Wilson, the same two judges who also issued dissenting opinions last week when the full court considered the case for the first time, said the barred pace of appeals made it impossible to determine if state courts properly considered the evidence.

The Supreme Court's decision to reject the appeal was expected amid some arbitrariness. Not only had justices repeatedly declined to intervene in the Schiavo case on previous occasions, but they routinely defer to state courts on family law issues.

Judges in various Florida courts have sided with Schiavo's husband since she suffered brain damage in 1990, when her heart stopped for several minutes because of a chemical imbalance apparently brought on by an eating disorder.

Parents' faith

Her parents doubt she had any end-of-life wishes and say she laughs, tries to speak and responds to them when they visit the hospice.

Dr. Evan Shutzer, a professor of pediatric medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, said it is hard to predict what would happen if the tube were to be removed because it is largely unused to do that after life-prolonging treatments have been stopped.

He said that if her kidneys have already shut down, removing the tube at this point might prolong her life by just hours or days. However, it could also hasten her death, he said, because it would apply fluids to a body that can no longer get rid of them.

God and Godzilla

Six protesters were arrested Wednesday, including one who was arrested when he tried to take a plastic cup of water into Terri Schiavo's hospice. Officers stopped him at the gate as he shouted: "You don't know God from Godzilla!"

Fifty-three protesters have been arrested since the rule was removed.

AP

PDI Reader's ...

From page B1

(SEC), Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima confirmed the other day.

Palabrica yesterday said he had received official word from the parliamentarians' bodies—Abakusbayan, the Department of Finance or the Securities and Exchange Commission—on his appointments.

Palabrica will be the fourth SEC commissioner replacing outgoing Commissioner Fe Elorde whose term expired on March 11.

Palabrica will join a unit of lawyers and financial experts led by SEC chair Bo Bunn.

Three also currently serving as commissioners are Justo Peñalosa, Antonio Cuervo and Irene Marrero.

Outgoing Commissioner Gloria had put in 14 years as commissioner and, on April 11, would have served the government and the SEC for 21 years, the shortest set in the corporate regulatory agency as a branch (district) chiefly before marriage here.

Corporate sector

A graduate of the UP College of Law, Palabrica was for 20 years connected with the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) where his last position was as first vice president for legal affairs and external corporate secretary.

He also served as director, legal counsel or corporate secretary for various PLDT subsidiaries until 1999.

GMA's office

That same year he joined the office of then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as chief of staff and general counsel until March 2000.

In April 2000, he was named Ingreso's general counsel and Bunn's Adviser.

Palabrica ranked 7th in the UP College of Law graduating class of 1972.

Now, it's Noli vs Loren in poll protest

From page A1

guard the ballots and count the election returns, schemes ignored during last year's canvassing.

"Those, I think, are victory," she said.

Lagarde expressed unbowed cour- tesy the dismissal of Poe's case but said his lawyers still had an option left, which was to file a motion for reconsideration.

"The dismissal of the 993 case wasn't affirmed my protest case because these are two different cases. In fact, my case has been found to be substantial [in form]," she told reporters at the opening of the two-day conference of Southeast Asian Parliamentarians against Corruption at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

Misappreciation

Lagarde had claimed that there were errors in the figures in the election documents, and that there was "misappreciation" of ballots and actual counting in the May 2004 elections.

The PET ordered Lagarde to "specify within 10 days from notice the three provinces how to establishing the manifest errors alleged in the first part of her protest, and the three provinces [and] municipalities [in Luzon and] cities alleged in the second part of her protest."

It also gave the Commission on Elections 10 days to submit the "official report of precincts" of the May polls.

Elliott said that with the ruling, the PET would now proceed with the revelations of the supposedly spurious election documents and ballots.

He said the process started on Monday, "If we stick to the schedule, it would take more than a year to resolve the election protest," he said, adding that this could happen if there would be no prolonged debates and the lawyers did not resort to delaying tactics.

P580 per precinct

Elliott said the review of votes and the deliberations will be closed to the public and the media, and would be conducted at the Supreme Court premises.

Lagarde will have to pay P580 per precinct revisited, he said.

When the ballots and documents are in he said by May the PET will form a revision team to carry out the disputed recounts of protests and certificates of canvass" to see if there is basis for the election irregularities claimed by Lagarde.

This process will take about 180 days, after which the PET will declare and debate the issue.

"The PET will decide according to its evidence at hand," Elliott said.

Asked whether the SEC, after hearing, affirmed Lagarde's protest, could that still be Ganero is step down, Elliott said this might not immediately happen because the Vice President could

WOMAN OF THE HOUR. Senator Sen. Loren Legarda, whose electoral protest has been given due course by the Supreme Court, joins her Her own colleagues like Sen. Juan Ponce during the opening of the Southeast Asia Parliamentarians Against Corruption meet. AP/AFP

still appeal the matter before the high court itself.

But this is a "gray area" because the PET is also made up of the justices, Elliott said.

"We are treading on an ephemeral territory," he said, adding that the high court had not yet told any President or Vice President to step down.

No jurisdiction

Three months ago, the PET junked Sen Ganero's petition to nullify Lagarde's election protest on the ground that it had no jurisdiction over the matter.

He filed a motion for reconsideration, which the PET denied only finality yesterday.

The ruling came a day after the PET voted unanimously to dismiss Poe's case against Arroyo, saying that no real party had come forward within the period allowed by law "to intervene in this case or be substituted for the deceased protestant."

The justices also denied the petition of Poe's widow, Susan Roces, to substitute for him, pointing out that she was not "the party who would be benefited or injured by the judgment, and the party who is entitled to avail of the suit."

Sen Ganero and Roces' defeat was "just unfair."

He called on Poe's followers to accept the PET's decision, saying it was fair how the old parties.

In his case, Sen Ganero said he continued to have faith in the judicial system and promised to abide by the legal and concrete considerations.

"I believe that (error) and I have the same objective—for the truth to come out," he said.

In her petition for a recount, Loren had claimed that massive fraud was committed in the counting of the votes in the vice presidential contest, thereby changing the actual results of the election.

"It is important that the people should know the true results of the presidential and vice presidential elections and not be because everything that is happening now is connected with what happened [then]," she said.

"This is not just my personal fight. It has gone beyond me and FPJ," she added.

Hone's challenge

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. advised Roces and her lawyers to file charges against those who had carried out the supposed massive fraud in the presidential election.

"I would love want to challenge and urge Susan and her lawyers to run after those who manipulated the results of the elections. And we have a basis for that," he told reporters.

Pimentel said the voluminous evidence presented by Poe's camp in his electoral protest could be used in the prosecution of election offenses, political operators, authorized (sic) and individuals who took part in the "systematic cheating."

"If and when Susan and her colleagues would pursue the criminal case against the cheaters in the last elections, there is nothing personal for them here. All they can achieve is to help cleanse the electoral process for the good of the people," he said. With reports from TJ Burgonio and Cynthia D. Balicuat

Honesty normal thing to do for 2 Naia janitors

From page A1

inter- with who were passengers of JAL flight [L-745] from Narita, which arrived in about 10:40 p.m. on March 25.

The couple had inadvertently left the bag in their seat in the business class section of the aircraft.

Pelaez, "Many Rusty" of the airport, immediately turned over the bag with its valuables to the JAL Passenger Service Section.

The couple, who JAL officials declined to identify for their protection, went to the airline's office at the Naia on Wednesday to inquire if the money had been found.

It was handed over to them intact.

Faith in the Filipino

At the JAL office yesterday Pelaez, 46, told reporters that returning the money was the right thing to do.

"[The] intangibles a race breed among men—providing a great incentive than concern one fatch to the Filipino," JAL said in a statement.

Cris Donovan, JAL deputy station manager, said that the airline would definitely reward Pelaez for his honesty.

Pelaez earns the daily minimum wage. He is employed by ISAMS Co., a contractor which provides the airline with maintenance people.

Pelaez has been working as a janitor and messenger since 1982.

23 pieces of jewelry

In another case of honesty, 59-year-old Nilda Santos, a janitress of PRC Management Center, turned over pieces of jewelry to the lost found at the Manila Domestic Airport yesterday noon.

The jewelry can amounted P150,000 to P200,000, according to Honorato Bonzalo of the Security and Investigation and Investigation Division of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa).

Ramos found a red jewelry box containing 23 pieces of jewelry such as gold and silver rings, in the pre-departure toilet room of the domestic airport at around 12:30 p.m.

Bonzalo said airport officials would turn over the jewelry to its owners once they come forward and present proof of ownership.

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Solon's plea: No to more new holidays

By Philip C. Tubeza

MTTE the government's four-day workweek all set to be implemented, a lawmaker yesterday urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to stop declaring more special non-working holidays.

Marikina Rep. Bel De Guzman urged the President to scrap the policy of declaring more holidays, since the country already had 11 legal holidays and three national special days every year.

De Guzman said that about 203 million man-hours were being lost while companies were paying employees an estimated P5.08 billion for every non-working holiday.

The figures were based on the 1.4 million members of the Government Service Insurance System and 24 million members of the Social Security System mobilized by eight working hours, he added.

De Guzman said the 11 regular public holidays were January 1, New Year's Day; movable dates for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday; April 9, Araw ng Kagitingan; May 1, Labor Day; June 12, Independence Day; the last Sunday of August, National Heroes Day; movable date for the end of Ramadan; Nov. 30, Bonifacio Day; December 25, Christmas Day; and December 30, Rizal Day.

He added that the country also observed three special holidays: August 21, Ninoy Aquino Day; Nov. 1, All Saints Day; and Dec. 31, New Year's Eve.

The other non-working days are Feb. 25, the Edsa 1 anniversary; election day (to be on the second Monday of May); half-day on Holy Wednesday and Black Saturday; half-day on December 24; and another day specific to a locality for the commemoration of the foundation of a municipality, city or province, he said.

De Guzman said he had filed House Resolution 20, which seeks a moratorium on the declaration of additional holidays.

During a House hearing on the resolution last month, Esther Garcia, deputy executive director for the National Wages and Productivity Commission, said that non-working holidays had adverse effects on the economy, such as forgone production of economic goods and lost wages.

He said daily wage earners also stand to lose due to the "no work, no pay" policy of companies.

Board of Investment official Amelia Bendanillo said holidays disrupted the operations of companies, particularly those in the export-oriented manufacturing industries in terms of delivery and other aspects of production.

She said employers also incurred additional costs, such as overtime pay for workers who had to work beyond office hours, during non-working holidays to meet deadlines.

Earlier, Malacañang explained that the holidays, including the recently approved 4-day workweek, were part of a government campaign to promote local tourism.

Pasig opens new P142-M, 2-lane bridge

By Edwin C. Tenebro Jr.

FOR RIBBON CUTTING

This is the promise of the new Ilog Bridge inaugurated yesterday morning to connect Barangays Bagong Ilog and Ilog Ilaya in Pasig City.

The bridge, which city officials say spans the Pasig River near the junction of the Marikina and Napindan rivers, serves as an alternative route to take pressure off Vargas Bridge over the intersection of C5 and Pasig Boulevard/Ortigas.

"We hope the new bridge will reduce by 50 percent the number of vehicles passing over traffic-prone Vargas bridge," Mayor Vicente Eusebio told the business yesterday.

Busy intersection

Vargas Bridge leads to the busy Kapasigan Area, particularly the intersection of Pasig Boulevard Extension and Dr. Sixto Antonio Avenue. It is also a key route to City Hall.

The Pasig Public Information Office said motorists coming from Pasig Boulevard or C5 wanting to take the new bridge may enter Dr. Sixto Antonio Street.

Vice president Noli De Castro and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando also attended the inauguration of the bridge.

Construction of the P142 million span began March 3, 2003. It was completed last March 15.

The new bridge is 284.6 meters long and 12 meters wide.

Rites groundbreaking

Later yesterday Dr. Castro led the groundbreaking ceremony for the planned Emilio Rites Village III in Barangay Maybunga.

The Vice President is also the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council chair.

The city government with the private group Gawad Kalinga plans to erect several five-story buildings to accommodate 1,700 families.

It is projected to be completed by June 2007.

Gawad Kalinga is the socio-civic arm of the Catholic lay group Couples for Christ. With a report from Rio Alfonso

Boy dies after fall from QC hotel window

By DJ Yap

A 12-YEAR-OLD boy fell to his death 12 floors from the window of a hotel Wednesday afternoon in Cubao, Quezon City.

Abraham Joseph Zapra, a grade-school pupil, died instantly after he fell from the 12th and top floor of Fernandina 88 Suites Hotel on E. Rodrigo Boulevard in Cubao, according to a police report.

Grace Lyn Cabuyao, a housemaid, told police she was busy in the kitchen of Room 908, on the hotel's seventh floor, where the victim's family was billeted, when the boy told her he would be going up to the 12th floor.

Loud thud

Moments later, Cabuyao said she heard a loud thud.

She dashed to the window and saw the boy's body on the ground outside, police said.

Two room attendants rushed the boy to the Quirino Memorial Medical Center, but he was declared dead on arrival, police said.

Investigators said the boy's mother refused to have his body autopsied, and for both Cabuyao to make a formal police statement.

But police said they would continue investigating the case.

BUSINESS

Email at business@inquirer.com.ph
Website www.inquirer.com.ph

Editor Raoul C. Pangalangan
Assistant Editor Everett S. Nicholas

Public sector deficit up 5.3% in '04

By Michelle V. Rosa

THE COUNTRY'S consolidated public sector deficit rose by 5.3 percent to P225.46 billion last year from the previous year's P221.67 billion, data from the Department of Finance showed.

The worsening public sector financial position was blamed on the continued widening of the budget gap posted by state-owned companies.

The 2004 figure was, however, lower than the target ceiling of P276 billion.

The consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) covers the financial position of the national government, government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs) and local government units (LGUs).

According to the DOF data, the deficits incurred by the 14 GOCCs being monitored by the national government rose by 38.9 percent to P40.74 billion in 2004 from only P29.33 billion in 2003.

The poor financial performance of the GOCCs prompted the finance department to review their financial standing and how they incurred the deficits. The results of the review will be used in determining whether to rationalize or even abolish the losing GOCCs.

"We will continue to focus on putting strict discipline on GOCCs. Companies are meant to earn money. If they are losing, we must fix [the] ratios," Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said in an interview at the sidelines of the general assembly of the Tax Management Association of the Philippines (yesterday).

GOCCs that incurred the biggest losses include the Development Bank of the Philippines, Philippine National Oil Co., Philippine Ports Authority, National Power Corp., Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Crop Insurance Corp., Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency, Philippine Forest Corp., Philippine Veterans Bank, Philippine Veterans Investment Development Corp., Philippine Ports Authority and the National Food Authority.

The higher public sector deficit figure in 2004 was also brought about by the deficit incurred by the national (NG) cash of P187.1 billion. But unlike the GOCCs, the national government was able to lower its deficit from the 2003 figure of P199.9 billion.

The increase in the deficit was also brought about by the rise in the amount earmarked for the settlement of obligations related to the restructuring of the old

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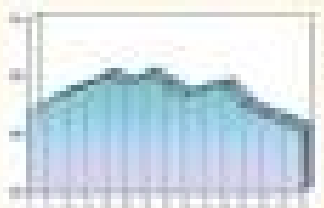

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As of 5 p.m. (Manila time), Mar. 31, 2005

P57.27 = ¥1

As of 5 p.m. (Manila time), Mar. 31, 2005

GOLD: USD 426.50-427.00

as quoted in Hong Kong, March 31, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Stocks slightly up

trading prices yesterday closed 0.11 percent higher, overcoming selling pressure ...

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

...country's record highest location, Bank of the Philippine Islands, for P1.22 billion.

The shares, according to a company statement, is in line with the Japanese firm's global ...

The sale, equivalent to 140.46 million shares, was sold for P80.25 per share in ...

The buyer of the stake was still undisclosed as of press time but ...

Sumitomo Mitsui unloads BPI stake

By Doris C. Dumlao

JAPANESE banking giant Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp. yesterday confirmed its 6.7 percent stake in the country's second largest lender, Bank of the Philippine Islands, for P1.22 billion.

The shares, according to a company statement, is in line with the Japanese firm's global ...

The sale, equivalent to 140.46 million shares, was sold for P80.25 per share in ...

The buyer of the stake was still undisclosed as of press time but ...

The sale price stood at a discount to BPI's unchanged closing price of P91 on the PSE ...

BPI, which enjoys the highest rating among Philippine banks based on the evaluation of Lim Asia-based Fitch Ratings, is a consensus favorite among local banking stocks.

Investors were held on 6-4 percent stake in BPI but had increased its holdings to the current level. In Tokyo, the bank announced that the transaction ...

BPI is majority controlled by holding conglomerate Ayala Corp. and Singapore's DBS Group ...

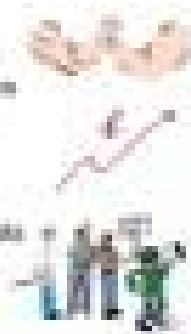
BUSINESS, B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Factors limiting business activity

(1st quarter 2005, in percent)



1	Competition	74.0
2	Insufficient demand	61.5
3	Onerous economic taxes	37.6
4	High interest rates	37.0
5	Financial problems	36.2
6	Access to credit	31.1
7	Labor problems	27.7
8	Lack of materials inputs	26.6
9	Lack of equipment	24.4
10	Others	16.7

Source: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

BASED on the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas survey of 1,010 firms, businessmen kept a positive outlook on the economy for both the first and second quarters of 2005. Competition and lack of demand topped the list of factors that hindered business growth.

Marvin S. Tolosa, INQ Research

BOC prohibits entry of right-hand-drive vehicles

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By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU of Customs has prohibited shipping companies and other carriers from bringing in imported right-hand drive vehicles.

Under Customs Memorandum Order No. 30-2005, carriers found carrying right-hand-drive vehicles will not be allowed to unload the units, and will be required to transport the vehicles back to the country of origin at their own expense.

The memorandum issued last Tuesday was aimed at putting more teeth into the government's efforts to protect consumers from accident-prone right-hand-drive vehicles.

Newly appointed Customs Commissioner Bert Lina said that although there was a law banning the importation of right-hand-drive vehicles, importers have found a way of circumventing it by converting the vehicles into left-hand drives.

Republic Act No. 8506, which bans the importation of right hand-drive vehicles, was passed in 1998 in response to concerns on safety and driving incidences of such vehicles.

Lina said the converted vehicles still did not ensure the safety of passengers because the process of converting the vehicles brings down quality.

"We will hold liable those that will disobey our decree," Lina said in a press briefing with reporters Wednesday night. He added that the BOC was still formulating the schedule of penalties.

The local automotive industry claimed that the rampant smuggling of used right-hand-drive vehicles, which are allegedly entering through and being converted in Subic Freeport, adversely affected the sales of cars manufactured or assembled locally.

The automotive industry has stressed the need to tighten the government's monitoring of the entry of used and right hand drive vehicles, saying full implementation of the law banning their importation was necessary to help the local automotive industry develop.

The industry has cited that in 2002, about 200,000 vehicles were registered with the Land Transportation Office, but the legitimate car manufacturers and assemblers only sold 60,000, showing the huge market share being eaten by the underground automotive underworld.

Lina said he BOC was embarking on an intensified campaign against smuggling, which was largely blamed for huge revenue losses for the fiscally troubled government.

Aside from assisting shipping firms in participate in the government's efforts to prevent the entry of right-hand-drive vehicles into said, the BOC was also strengthening its anti-drug operations through computerization.

Cement prices expected to remain stable in Q2

BAMBOO hauler Republic Cement Group of Companies said cement prices were expected to remain stable in the first half of the year.

Jose Miguel Montelaba, president of Republic Cement Corp., said favorable development, such as improved production efficiency, and the price appreciation vis-a-vis the dollar, were expected to allow cement companies to keep their prices stable even during the summer months, when construction activities were expected to peak.

"The biggest threat to stable cement prices in the near quarter is an increase in power rates. The last time the company effected a price increase was in January and this was shortly after the implementation of the power rate increase in November 2004. The magnitude of that power rate increase, which was a 14-percent increase for Luzon, left us no choice but to adjust our prices upwards," Montelaba said.

Lately, there have been several reports of continuous cement price increases and Republic was quick to comment that except for the adjustment in January, the company had kept its prices constant. In fact, for the past six months the ex-plant price of the Republic Cement Group in the National Capital Region (NCR) only increased by an average of 4 percent, from P134 to P 140.00/ 40-kg bag of ordinary Portland cement (OPC).

"In order to be competitive customers from price increases, alternative products have been provided suitable for most construction needs at lower prices."

The Republic Group boasts of having the widest product offering in the cement industry.

The Republic Cement group is composed of five operating cement plants in Luzon and Mindanao. Aside from parent company Republic Cement Corp., the other affiliated cement companies include Pioneer Cement Corp., Continental Cement Corp., Fil Oriental Corp. and Bigan Cement Corp. The company is affiliated with Lafarge SA, the world's biggest cement and construction materials provider.

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BUSINESS

DOE, DOJ revive oil monitoring task force

By Abigail L. Ho

TO ENSURE fair competition in the downstream oil industry, the Department of Justice and the Department of Energy will reconstitute a joint task force for a review of its powers and functions.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez have agreed to again convene the DOE-DOJ Task Force, following the suggestion of Consumers and Oil Price Watch chairlead Encarnacion.

"The task force has been in place for the past seven years, and we would like to review how it has undertaken its functions and how it can be improved," Lotilla yesterday said in a statement.

Under Section 5.4 of RA 8479 or the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998, the DOE-DOJ Task Force will serve as an overseer of the downstream oil sector, having the right to investigate any seeming anti-competitive in the prices of petroleum products.

It can also take action on complaints filed by any entity against oil industry players who may be engaging in unfair market practices. Action will be taken after a thorough investigation.

A memorandum of agreement between the DOJ and the DOE signed in March 1998 formally created the task force, as mandated by the Oil Deregulation Law.

Apart from making sure that the downstream oil market would be totally competitive, the DOJ-DOE Task Force would look at the adequate and continuous supply of environmentally clean and high quality petroleum products at reasonable prices.

During the seven years of its existence, the DOJ-DOE Task Force had hardly met.

With oil prices rising every week this month, Concepcion called on the DOE and the DOJ to explore the merits of reconvening the task force.

While revisiting its powers and functions, Lotilla said, the task force could also make suggestions to the five-person panel currently reviewing the Oil Deregulation Law.

Malacañang has ordered a review of the Oil Deregulation Law to determine whether or not there was a need to amend the current law.

The independent review is now being conducted by Carlos Almeda, SGV and Co. chair and former commissioner of the Energy Regulatory Commission, Jesse Tan Yu, dean of the University of Asia and the Pacific College of Economics, Finance, Banking, secretary general of the Confederation of Land Transportation Organization of the Philippines, Marcelino Cuesta, president of the Petroleum Dealers Association of the Philippines, and Jesse Lorzano, former director of the defunct Petroleum Board.

Hinchada headed the panel.

The review panel has 90 days to conduct a series of consultations with various industry stakeholders to examine them to come up with recommendations on how the existing law could be improved.

The recommendations would be submitted to the Department of Energy.

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NTC says Q1 collections almost hit ₱1B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission yesterday claimed that it had already collected almost a billion pesos in fees and charges in the first quarter.

The regulator got a boost in February when it received a one-time gain of ₱540 million from Philippine Telephone Corp. for unpaid regulatory fees and penalties.

In January, the NTC collected about ₱400 million to spend next month for frame relief fee. The fee is for the use of the airwaves.

Ronaldo Avila, NTC chair, said the agency this year was tasked by the government to raise ₱1.49 billion—almost the entire level as its 2004 collection.

"We already collected almost ₱1 billion," said the NTC chief. "We are sure to meet our target."

While the huge collections, Avila said a plan to increase the rate of fees and charges was not on hold.

The NTC and Pldot earlier reached a compromise where the commission agreed to reduce its earlier assessments of ₱1.3 billion.

The NTC reckoned its assessment after the justice department issued an opinion confirming the agency against the "confiscatory nature" of its surcharges and penalties.

Of the ₱1.3 billion in fees earlier assessed by the NTC, ₱261 million was for 2004. Almost ₱900 million comprise the penalties and surcharges.

The NTC was planning to increase fees and charges by 20 percent starting this year, but its regulated firms opposed the move, saying it was not the commission's job to raise revenue for the government.

The commission said it would like to raise more revenue and to retain a portion of its earnings so it could finance a five-year computerization project called eNTC, which would cost about ₱500 million.

Avila said the NTC would ask Congress to allow the regulator to retain half of about ₱800 million in regulatory fees it collects every September of each year.

The commission said aside from the computerization project, it would also like to beef up its research and legal departments.

Compared to its counterparts in the Southeast Asia region, Avila said the NTC's research and legal teams, while very capable, were also very small.

Ginebra sets aside ₱2B to boost distillery

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GINEBRA San Miguel Inc. (GSMI), the local liquor arm of Southeast Asia's food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., is setting aside ₱2 billion this year, primarily for the upgrade of its distilleries.

In a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission, GSMI said over ₱1.5 billion would go to the upgrade and repair of the existing facilities, and the expansion of alcohol production capacity. The remaining ₱400 million would be used for the continued upgrading and repair of bottling plants.

Last year, GSMI spent ₱865 million for capital expenditures, the bulk of which went to operations improvement and the repair of bottling plants.

To fast-track entry into regional markets, GSMI executives signed a purchase agreement with the Hai Liu Group of Companies for the purchase of 40 percent in CNT Wine and Liquor Co. Ltd.

CNT is licensed to manufacture alcohol and distribute brandy, wine and distilled spirits products in the domestic and export markets. It is currently constructing a production facility that is expected to be completed in 2006.

GSMI earlier said net income rose 2 percent to ₱1.00 billion last year as volume of liquor sold also expanded 8 percent.

For the fourth quarter, operating income grew 13 percent to ₱915 million as the company increased selling and marketing efforts.

For the full year, GSMI's operating income grew 9 percent to ₱2.96 billion.

MALAMPAYA RESERVES

$3B needed to connect RP gas field to Asean pipeline

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ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL GSIS MEMBERS

28 March 2005

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 02-05

TO : ALL HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND COMMISSIONS, PRESIDENTS OF STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, CHIEFS OF BUREAUS AND OFFICES, MANAGING HEADS OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS, ACCOUNTING, FINANCE, COLLECTING AND/OR DISBURSING OFFICERS THEREOF, AUDITORS, METRO MANILA/PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL MAYORS AND TREASURERS, ALL GSIS MEMBERS AND OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT : GSIS CHECKS FOR LOANS AND BENEFITS

To further improve GSIS services, effective 1 April 2005, the proceeds of all types of loans and benefits shall be paid thru Philippine National Bank (PNB) checks except those issued by the following GSIS offices which shall use Union Bank of the Philippines (UBP) checks:

- GSIS Central Office in Pasay City
- GSIS Quezon City Field Office
- GSIS Pampanga Field Office
- GSIS Cebu Field Office
- GSIS Davao Field Office

As an added security measure to prevent fraud and to further ensure that intended beneficiaries receive the proceeds of GSIS loans and benefits, the System has adopted the crossed-check policy in April 2003. This means that all GSIS issued checks are for deposit to payee's account only.

However, members may still encash their PNB or UBP checks at the respective PNB or UBP branch anywhere in the country up to 31 May 2005 only. After this date, GSIS shall strictly enforce the crossed-check policy. This means that effective 1 June 2005, GSIS issued checks can only be encashed if deposited to the payee's bank account and shall no longer be accommodated for over-the-counter encashment.

Members are therefore encouraged to open an account with a bank of their choice to where they can deposit their checks. For the benefit of the members, GSIS has arranged with PNB an opening and maintaining balance requirement of only P500.00 instead of the normal requirement of P5,000.00.

For members who will acquire or have acquired their GSIS eCard, the proceeds of their loans and claims shall be credited to their eCard account with UnionBank. Thus, there is no more need for the members to open another account. The eCard account with UBP requires no maintaining balance and members can withdraw the proceeds of their loans and benefits through UBP ATMs and over 5,000 Megalink, Bancnet and Expressnet ATMs anywhere in the country.

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By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA—Some $3 billion may be needed to connect the Philippines to other gas reserves in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) region via a gas pipeline linking the Malampaya gas field in Palawan to another gas field in Brunei.

Rodolfo Antonio Parilla, Philippine National Oil Co. senior vice president, ownership said in a briefing that the figure was based on the cost of building the existing pipeline that connected the Malampaya gas field to the natural gas-fired power plants in Batangas.

To build a pipeline 1,000 kilometers long, it would take around $1.3 billion, Rodriguez said.

But he quickly added that this cost estimate was "overachiever" old.

"The cost now would be pretty much on the high side," Rodriguez said.

The recent Brunei-Malaysia pipeline project would be around 1,000 kilometers long. Using the cost of the Palawan-Batangas pipeline as a benchmark, he said the cost of building the Brunei-Palawan pipeline should be about $3 billion.

Confirming the high cost of building the gas pipeline, Rodriguez said its profitability should be well-established.

During the 22nd Asean Ministers on Energy Meeting in June last year, Asean energy head-ers signed a memorandum of understanding on the Trans-Asean Gas Pipeline (TAGP).

The ratification of the TAGP MOU paved the way for the formal establishment of the Asean Gas Coordinative Council and the Asean Gas Center in Malaysia.

"The ministers reaffirmed that interconnected networks of electricity grids and gas pipelines in the Asean region offer significant benefits in terms of both energy security, reliability and quality of energy supply and greater competition," the Asean ministers had said.

The TAGP project will follow a five-year plan, which provides for five gas pipelines: the cross-border interconnection South Sumatra-Peninsular Malaysia, West Natuna-Duyung in Malaysia, East Natuna-Sarawak in Thailand, East Natuna-West Natuna-Singapore.

While other components of the TAGP have not been placed under the priority list, these will also be undertaken in the future.

Former Energy Secretary Vicente Perez said private sector participation can key to ensuring that the Asean gas pipeline would materialize as it entailed a huge amount of investment in its recovery.

"To finish the TAGP, we need private sector investment," Perez had said.

RP trims BOP errors to below global norms

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has slimmed down the errors and omissions in its balance of payments (BOP) to "negligible" levels following a shift to a new accounting method.

Jaime, International Monetary Fund official, and other analysts from around the world had expressed their concern over the country's BOP data.

Beginning the 2003 and 2004 BOP using the new accounting method, the negative errors and omissions—also known as "net unclassified items"—were reduced to $220 million and $163 million, respectively from $2.08 billion and $2.5 billion.

"There is a real improvement, as far as net errors and omissions are concerned," said Dena Ramiguida, BSP assistant governor. "There were fluctuations in the past that the numbers were even bigger than the current net error and omission."

The IMF, in a recent country report, said reporting gaps and misclassifications made Philippine data difficult to interpret.

Before the 2004 BOP data was revised, the IMF said, the current account surplus looked insufficient to finance net capital outflows. Also, the data fueled expectations of a loss in foreign exchange reserves.

Ramiguida said the reduction in the net unclassified items now put the level to below global norms. He said if these items were 5 percent of global trade or lower, it would be "quite safe" based on international standards.

"We're now just about 0.3 percent for 2003 and 0.8 percent for 2004 of global trade, so that's practically negligible," he said.

Ramiguida said the reduced level of errors and omissions could very well even with the 0.6 percent average in advanced economies. In 2000, he said Australia's errors and omissions accounted for 0.27 percent of its global trade.

The United Kingdom's record was 0.26 percent.

In the past, the Philippines' net unclassified items hit as high as 3.1 percent of its global trade.

"How can you analyze the fundamental strength of the Philippine economy if you're not aware of the data," Ramiguida noted.

Asked whether it was possible to wipe out the remaining unclassified items, Ramiguida said: "What is now continuing is improved data monitoring and, over time, we'll be able to capture them."

The adjustment in the country's external statistics was based on the recommendation of IMF statistical missions, for instance, a component arising from was included in overseas Filipino workers (OFW) accounts to enhance remittance estimates through banking system.

Furthermore, OFWs are now split into residents (income account) and non-residents (current transfer). In accordance with a one-year residency rule recommended by the IMF manual.

There was likewise an adjustment in imports data to correct the underestimation of consigned raw materials for electronics, thereby providing a better representation of the electronics industry that is more import-dependent than what was suggested by the old numbers.

As for some items, trade credits are now based on foreign exchange (FX) sales reports, compared to the previous system of deriving trade receivables and payables from data on goods shipments and payments.

The computation of direct and portfolio investments were also changed to include transactions which bypass the banking system, such as resident investments abroad.

Lufthansa expects to raise passenger volume by 30%

By Clarissa S. Bautista

GERMAN carrier Lufthansa said it was targeting to increase its passenger volume to and from the Philippines by as much as 30 percent starting this year.

"We have never seen more for the Philippine market," said Christopher Zimmer, Lufthansa's general manager for the Philippines, Guam and Micronesia. "Our target is to increase by 20-30 percent the passenger volume here."

Zimmer also expects a corresponding increase in revenue from local operations with the rise in passenger volume.

"We want to make this route more profitable for the airline. We have the route, and we have now non-stop flights to Manila again," said Zimmer during the Wednesday launch of the airline's new Airbus business class seats.

Lufthansa services the Manila-Frankfurt, Manila route daily. From Manila, the plane stops at Guam, China, for technical checks and to pick up passengers going to Frankfurt.

The German airline used to stop in Bangkok to unload and pick up passengers.

The stopover proved not very profitable for Lufthansa as the majority of the passengers would alight in Bangkok, whether coming from Manila or Frankfurt. This prompted the airline to stop the Bangkok route.

The Lufthansa official said that while the load factor of 92 percent was higher when the airline was stopping in Bangkok than the 80-percent load factor of the Guam route, the revenue was more robust now as more passengers from Manila fly straight to Europe.

He said two-thirds of the current volume were passengers from the Philippines going to Europe and only one-third were passengers from Cebu is going to Frankfurt.

Lufthansa started offering low-fare tickets (to so-called "Fraueniflieg" or business class to and from Manila. The test is equipped with a 30.4-inch personal video screen, laptop connection, and power outlets. The seats allow for an angle of up to nine degrees in the floor which translates it into a flat bed.

In 1998, there were eight airlines serving the Manila-Europe route, such as the British Airways, Swissair, Air France, KLM, Alitalia, Lufthansa, Aeroflot and the Philippine Airlines. These carriers operated a combined 39 flights a week between Manila and seven European capitals, 12 of them non-stop services.

Today the only ones left are Air France (CAI) and Lufthansa and they fly less than 20 times weekly to and from certain European cities.

Public sector deficit up . . .

To next page B5

central bank. From P15.66 billion in 2003, the gross central last year ballooned P77.478 billion for the purpose.

The impact of the deficits of the national government and the GOCCs on the fiscal position of the public sector was, however, partly offset by the surpluses posted by the GFIs, including Land Bank and Development Bank of the Philippines. The GFIs posted a budget surplus of P1.2 billion last year, up from P8.916 billion in 2003.

The state-owned pension funds—the Social Security System and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)—posted a combined surplus of P25.162 billion, up from P17.186 billion.

The Surplus Sentral ng Pilipinas, for its part, registered a surplus of P3.27 billion which, however, was lower than the previous year's P76.9 billion.

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ECOMPROPHET

Audi-city

COCKTALES

Hector C. Agoncillo

[illegible] Hosaic and Paul Bolidgueo are not giving up their Audi dealership to businessman magnate Robert Coyiuto Jr. without a fight.

The Bodigueros have sued Audi for breach of contract and managed to wangle a temporary restraining order from, of all places, a Pangasinan regional trial court.

Apparently, the Bodigueros have a joint venture agreement drawn up with the Audi group during the go-go Ramos years to establish an assembly plant in PVB's province. That plant, which was also meant to service the Proton from Malaysia, has since been killed by the economy crisis.

According to the grapevine, the TRO proved to be an empty victory because the court order covered only the province. At the last count, unless you include the Audi in el Presidente parliamentarian Leonardo Egeson Reyna, order of the Exocet karate vehicle in the province amounted to a big fat zero.

If you can believe lawyers, the Bodigueros have asked Jess Dee over Olympic posters for 50 million euros in return for perfunctory peace. Rearing the dreaded, the normally-iron Germans could not help but roll in laughter and were dismissed, according to the legal sharks.

Meanwhile, the lavish gusto of a new dealership have taken a personal toll on the Coiuyto family scions. A 12-year-old Captain explorer suffered a fractured shoulder and ribs after a clever bit Quadron the field team executing one on the happy wrestling mats of Tagaytay Highlands wrapped it well around an electric pole on Black Saturday.

The young Coiuyto is recovering quite well, thank goodness. His father, Mike, Robert's brother who is in charge of the Roxadin and the coming Audi dealership, suffered only minor scratches, despite also failing to sing Silent night with crashes.

Unfortunately, one Audi salesman had his life in that accident. The driver-baller was totaled.

Internet at 35,000 feet

Abiz speaking of the Germans, Lufthansa, established a local record of sorts when it became the first airline to offer unlimited on-board Internet access to Manila passengers.

Last Monday, Lufthansa began using the upcoming new Airbus A340-600 for its Manila-Guangzhou-Frankfurt flight, whose fleets designed for first business class seats also offer in-seat and WLAN connections.

Along with the new route and the new aircraft, Lufthansa spokesperson announced to push the Philippines as a tourist destination as well. Proof of this is that the new country manager, Christopher Diemer went to Boracay four days after he was still assigned to Tegel Poland, and a Philippine passport was still a photo in his eyes.

If the first few months of traffic proves encouraging, Lufthansa has eight new A340-600 aircraft in its fleet by 2006 and [illegible] KLM-Air France—I'll already the four airlines that flew straight to Europe (via Amsterdam) out of Manila—total competition.

Soak a la polvo

ABOARA party treasurer, studbroker owner Carmelo "Micky" Santiago, does have to flex some hands for himself and his couple children are no less before his previous divorce.

Santiago's son-in-law, Richard Hawes, was arrested by the Makati police Monday night in his self-aware office after Makati Prosecutor Antonio Liu is charged Hawes with 8 counts of estafa.

Unfortunately for Santiago, he was also charged with violation of Batas Pambansa 22, since the military P4-million check that Hawes used to [illegible] allegedly issued as collateral to a secured business transaction was Santiago's personal check.

Santiago, in his defense, said that the check had been stolen from his files and that he was [illegible]

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Higher expenses pulled down by 25% ABS-CBN profit in '04

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ALEJANDRO

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. said its 2004 net income slipped by 25 percent to P736 million from P1 billion in 2003 due to higher expenses.

ABS-CBN president Luis Alejandro said the year would be more challenging for the network because of the tight competitive environment.

In a briefing yesterday, ABS-CBN officials said the company's consolidated cost and operating expenses for P13.65-billion, up 15 percent from last year due to **higher cash operating expenses**, which included production costs, personnel and administrative expenses, and cost of sales and services. Cash operating expenses spiked 19 percent last year due to the network reproduction costs.

Production costs increased for the bulk of the total operating expenses to reach P4.14 billion, up by 19 percent from previous year's level.

The rise in production cost was attributed to the rise in personnel expenses and talent fees brought about by the increased station-produced shows in place of outsourced programs.

Local programs remained Spanish telenovelas and animation programs.

The higher production costs was also brought about by the special effects involved in the making of fantasy aswy-cartoon series like "Mulawin" and "Darna."

General and administrative expenses grew double digit driven by higher personnel expenses and ABS-CBN Global's entry into new territories. The increase in personnel cost was due to higher bonus, casual, salary increases, separation costs and payout of incentives for the prior year's performance.

ABS-CBN Global's start up operations in Europe and Australia contributed to the growth of taxes and licensing fees, advertising and promotions expenses.

Net revenue was up by 7 percent at P13.65 billion from P12.64 billion.

ABS-CBN Global remained the biggest contributor to net sales and services with a total share of 71 percent of the total.

ABS-CBN Global's net sales and services grew by 9 percent to P13.05 billion from the previous year's level.

Alejandro said the television company was scheduled to launch two shows in the next few months, including the remake of the Intimate'ys prime like "Pandoy" and "Sampaguita Soho."

ATR KE told to dump shares in GR Life

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has directed pre-need firm The Professional Financial Plans (TPFI) to comply with pre-need rules and dispose of its 20 percent in GF Life Insurance Co.

The SEC issued the ruling to settle a complaint lodged by the LBC Group, one of TPFI's major shareholders, against ATR KE Capital, one of the trust fund managers of the pre-need firm.

The LBC Group had alleged that there was a breach of duty when ATR KE Capital used the TPFI's trust fund to pay for the investment in GF Life.

Abraham Cotoco, ATR KE Capital director and trust officer, in a statement said that the trust fund manager would seek a 30-day consideration from the SEC to complete the divestment in GF Life.

"Now that the SEC has directed us to divest of the GF Life investment from the TPFI Trust Fund, we will seek their consideration to give us 30 days to complete this task which, we believe, is reasonable to ask," Cotoco said in a statement.

"We believe that the SEC had nothing but the best interest of the pre-need holders in mind when it issued this directive," he added. "The SEC wanted to differ any controversy to remove all doubts regarding the safety of the TPFI Trust Fund."

Cotoco also said that ATR KE Capital would like to engage the services of an independent financial advisor to make sure the TPFI Trust Fund would get the best deal. The third party advisor would JOIN ATR KE Capital in the divestment.

According to Cotoco, the GF Life shares is a good investment and in business has been profitable.

"Hence we also believe that the stock could now be sold at a price which will yield a good return for the TPFI Trust Fund," Cotoco said.

The SEC directive was based on the FY 1 of the same pre-need rules, said Teddie Aquino, SEC non-traditional securities and investments department director.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Cocktails

Turn to page B3

ing blacklisted into making good the payment.

Money go-round

■ SEC Commissioner Fe Gloria says her retirement package for her 33 years of government service "will not even reach P10 million," contrary to the P10-million figure reported in this column on Wednesday.

■ JABE Augusto Zobel de Ayala III has acquired and is overseeing an apartment in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and that area may be bad to dispose of a sizable blue of Ayala Land shares late last year.

Heard through the grapevine

THE EXPECTED screening of new Manila mayor Lito Atienza's son Ernesto Seneres Jr. with past MDC presidents to discuss the fate of two members who allegedly abused their cards to improve their scores in the last Golden Tee tournaments is getting ahead of the story.

Why? The investigating committee chaired by lawyer Alfonso "Boy" Reyno has yet to submit its report to the board. Remember, at the time of this writing, was still in recess, enjoying an extended Holy Week holiday.

Reyno himself was absent during the last membership meeting when outgoing president Gwen Garci, in the punchiness of not a few members, declared that asses-fixing had indeed been commercial.

(Email: colondes_pilipinas@yahoo.com or colondes_pilipinas@mail.com)

A technology crying for support

By Brenda M. Cordoba

ROSARIO, Cavite, Mr. Filipinas national coordinator, is puzzled. Thousands of his farmers are disappointed. Supporters of the low cost, organically-oriented System of Rice Intensification (SRI) are losing face.

Despite the positive research results and the public statements of support given by several Department of Agriculture officials, the DA Rice Program continues to push the high-input, high-yield technology that has obtained only small increases in yield, substantial increases in cost and little or no benefit to the farmer.

Why? Is it only because SRI is small scale plots but also in large areas. PAGE Bajo's 166-acre rice farm in Iloilo yielded an average of 11.2 tons per hectare. While the SRI technology is not obviously suited to small intensively-managed plots, substantial increases can also be obtained on a large scale.

But the Philippines, as total newcomers and the high population growth rate force farmers to till increasingly smaller plots of land, SRI becomes doubly important because of its perfect suitability for small-scale plots.

■ SRI usually reduces cost of production. This, together with higher yields, increases farmer profitability and income. Studies show an average 20 percent net income increase for SRI over conventional methods. Ampatuan's Mindanao and Zamboanga Peninsula SRI will earn. The rest of the regions will make their decisions during their regional meetings conducted this April.

Why SRI

A week ago, we met with Cornell University professor Norman Uphoff, the foremost SRI global proponent. When he heard about the P500-million Hybrid rice program, he sent several offers and more for SRI, he was taken aback.

In a private but recently developed report the request of Arroyo, Uphoff stated: "The feature of Rice Intensification (SRI)...is changing the way that rice plants, soil, water and nutrients are managed...can have its more dramatic effects on yields, generally raising yields by 50-100 percent or more. But there are many other reasons why farmers and their governments should consider adopting SRI practices."

Here are some of the reasons:

■ SRI yield increases are obtained not only by farmers producing at a low level but also by farmers using modern high-input technology. Increased yields are obtained in the face of rice monsters who already exceed their yields to improve their returns in the last Golden Tee tournaments is getting ahead of the story.

■ SRI can be used by resource-poor farmers who cannot afford to buy seeds and chemical (e.g. pests and diseases) inputs that reduced cost of production. Studies in Cambodia showed that the incidence from soil born from this production was reduced by 50 percent by the organic production methods and up by 4 percent with SRI.

■ Because it has practically no capital requirements, with any purchases necessary except harvesting some materials, SRI is especially accessible for the poor. Uphoff states: "Being able to get significantly higher yields from their small parcels of land makes SRI attainable for subsisting food security...SRI should be able to help many rural households who live in perpetual debt because of their food deficits to get out from under this burden."

Conclusion

Every technology has its advantages and disadvantages. While Inbred rice has the promise of high yields, it uses heavy chemical inputs and can result in losses if used inappropriately.

Similarly, SRI must be properly implemented. It is recommended that the farmer transfer the seedlings at a younger age (8 to 12 days old) and at wider spacing (25 x 25 cm). Transplanting only one seedling per hill is also recommended.

Finally, SRI must be properly implemented. It is recommended that the farmer transfer the seedlings at a younger age (8 to 12 days old) and at wider spacing (25 x 25 cm). Transplanting only one seedling per hill is also recommended.

We have a real asset in the completion of the rice program manager Francisco Mendenson. When I suggested the rice program to SRI, we estimated that the 700,000 hectares that need certified rice seeds would drop significantly because of the P350-million cut in the budget. Instead, with creative management strategies, we more than doubled it. We had rice usage to 1.1- million hectares, resulting in record rice yields and increased farmer incomes.

It is hoped that Mendenson uses these same methods in expanding and managing the SRI option during the regional rice program meetings this April. Mission (09.19.4287.0274) can be used as an SRI resource person for this.

The DA regional program directors will largely determine the level of SRI support in their respective regions. To a significant degree, these meetings will also determine the future of SRI, food security and the livelihood of the small rice farmers in the Philippines.

The author is the chair of agronomy, a private sector initiative, former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agriculturephilippines.com or telefax 85-96033.

DISCLOSURES

ABS-CBN Lorenzo declined to announce his position as director of Fuelling Inc.

LIBERTY Flour Mills Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 26, 1 p.m. at the Liberty Building, Senate Avenue, Makati City. Record date is Apr 6.

* * *

A. BROWN Co. Inc. bought 30,000 of its own shares at P1.86 each.

* * *

DETAILS SERIA. Container Terminal Services Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 21, 10 a.m. at the Ngarion Ballroom of the Peninsula Manila, Makati City. Record date is March 11.

* * *

PETROLIC Metro Holdings Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 28, 2 p.m. at the 3/F of Republic Glass Building, Legaspi Village, Makati City. Record date is March 18.

* * *

THE PHILODRILL Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 29, 3 p.m. at the La Colina room of Valle Verde Country Club, Pasig City. Record date is April 15.

* * *

SALCON Power Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 23, 9:30 a.m. at the Manila Polo Club. Record date is April 29.

* * *

BENGUET Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 29, 3 p.m. at the Sign of the Angel, 5/F of Lopezkim Pet Bank Tower 1, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of May 3 will be entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

* * *

ALSEC Terminals Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 28, 2 p.m. at the Ninoys Ballroom of Manila Philippine Plaza, Pasay City. Stockholders of record as of March 29 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

Compiled by Maricar P. Tabios, PDI Research

Sumitomo Mitsui . . .

Turn to page B3

Holdings Ltd. its number capital station stood at P119 billion as end 2004 as against the book end. as of PCI billion.

The country's oldest bank reported a net income of P6.7 billion last year, P1 billion or 17 percent higher than P5.7 billion in 2003, boosted by higher revenue and efficiency improvements.

Its return on equity improved to 14.5 percent from 11.1 percent in the previous year while return on assets rose to 1.6 percent from 1.3 percent.

The year-on ADS rates rose a 5.38 percent growth in net profits over 2004 despite expectations of more difficult business environment.

BPI's non-CEO Aurelio Montinola III said BPI hoped to continue outperforming the local banking sector in terms of its bottom line and of the expansion of more quality BPI subsidiaries to serve more "customer-oriented," he said.

CURRENCIES

March 31, 2005 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.1736 =	1.000000	5.7590
Japan	Yen	0.001703	0.009804	0.5880
United Kingdom	Pound	0.3267	1.881881	5.4000
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.0223	0.128377	7.7894
Switzerland	Franc	0.1351	0.778035	1.2854
Canada	Dollar	0.1411	0.812536	1.2307
Singapore	Dollar	0.1021	0.587917	1.7010
Australia	Dollar	0.1340	0.771660	1.2961
Taiwan	Dollar	0.0054	0.031105	32.1500
South Korea	Won	0.0001	0.000576	1736.0000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.0457	0.263133	3.8000
Thailand	Baht	0.0043	0.024770	40.3750
China	Yuan	0.0210	0.120968	8.2667
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0000	0.000173	5780.0000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.1200	0.690972	1.4475
Bahrain	Dinar	0.4608	2.653333	0.3769
Kuwait	Dinar	0.5966	3.435333	0.2911
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.0463	0.266667	3.7500
Qatar	Riyal	0.0477	0.274667	3.6406
Bahrain	Dirham	0.0473	0.272000	3.6765
Oman	Rial	0.4510	2.597333	0.3850
Jordan	Dinar	0.2450	1.410667	0.7089
Lebanon	Pound	0.0001	0.000576	1736.0000
Egypt	Pound	0.0302	0.173867	5.7500
Turkey	Lira	0.1303	0.750000	1.3333
Russia	Ruble	0.0060	0.034722	28.8000
India	Rupee	0.0040	0.023256	43.0000
Sri Lanka	Rupee	0.0017	0.009804	102.0000
Pakistan	Rupee	0.0029	0.016949	59.0000
Vietnam	Dong	0.0000	0.000064	15625.0000
Bangladesh	Taka	0.0025	0.014706	68.0000
Mexico	Peso	0.0159	0.091667	10.9091
Brazil	Real	0.0600	0.345833	2.8913
Argentina	Peso	0.0333	0.192000	5.2083
Chile	Peso	0.0003	0.001667	600.0000
Colombia	Peso	0.0001	0.000345	2900.0000
Peru	Nuevo Sol	0.0520	0.300000	3.3333
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.0001	0.000345	2900.0000
Czech Republic	Koruna	0.0057	0.033333	30.0000
Hungary	Forint	0.0007	0.004167	240.0000
Poland	Zloty	0.0560	0.322917	3.0968
Romania	Leu	0.0000	0.000144	6944.0000
Ukraine	Hryvnia	0.0344	0.198333	5.0420
Euro	Euro	0.2300	1.326667	0.7538

Source: Bankers Association of the Philippines

LIFESTYLE

SHANON Pamaong

Philippine fashion shows new styles and old vanities

NONALDO Arnaldo

JH Quidlayan

PHOTOS DJ Enriquez jr.

The ego has landed on Fashion Week

Text by Charlie V. Mara
Photos by Jon Sosa-Parazo

WHOT is the point of the Philippine Fashion Week, really?

It is not about egos, asserted Joey Espino, who, with brother Andie and their outfit, Runway Productions, is the progenitor of the eight-year-old event. It is about pushing the local fashion industry forward in the hopes that, with the unified effort of its many movers and corporate sponsors, Philippine fashion can one day just maybe approximate other cohort countries already have.

It's not about egos. Perhaps, in a perfect world.

On gala night Monday however, in reverse of the sentiment one hour or so, some designers, fueled widespread anticipation the show would yield fresh, new ideas, a creative designer came up with a steadily "local" collection. A few others gave in to stroking their egos with collections that, for the most part, had neither rhyme nor reason.

"How can we expect to be taken seriously?" one bewildered designer in the audience asked.

But alls not lost. Majority of the 25 designers that night came up with coherent collections. The gala got major backing from Sony Ericsson Bingo, and was a mix of talents from Rhein Mercado, Cebu, Davao, Bohol and Baseboi.

Low-key designers like Arnaldo Arnaldo and Sharon Pamaong earned applause for their works. The former's collection of gowns in somber blacks area stunning in its simplicity, spiced only by gold tied to straps of shimmery fabrics to equally neutral colors on the bodices, were crowning 40 years. Arnaldo's lines were clean and highlighted his deft construction.

Fabric treatments

While his collection did not exhibit a theme, Pamaong displayed skill in rumaking fabrics. There was no fancy styling for his clothes, just a obsession of treatments that looked deceptively simple, like draping a solid piece to conform to a body or throwing drapes on the body.

Cebuil Preteen Hispanic Jr. showed basic-pointed men's shirt and ruffled cropped pants, and some needlework on dyed organzas. Fellow Cebuano Mario Colmenares had genuine sales points scrunched only with bends or black sarong on the necklines.

It was rather baffling that three JUN designers were included in the gala lineup—Bel Gotilloson, Mike de la Rosa and Ocrico Cosmos.

Gotilloson's collection is notable for its fresh looks, where lace and denim like blue fabric co-mingled to create pretty skirts and pullovers. Mixed prints in less outcome really seems several of the pieces.

In contrast, Cosmos went lazy by keeping several elements to-

FOR MORE 22

HAMID Colmenares

Brassieres for Perfect Fit

WACOAL NEWS

Your size is only a guide in achieving a comfortable fit. Size refers to dimensions, not shape. As everyone has a different shape, and any person's body shape may alter from day to day, your own body shape must be considered when you are purchasing underwear. For your underwear must not only be the right size, it must also fit your shape.

Besides, though undergarments may be of the same size, their fit varies depending on their quality, fabric and cut. The role of an undergarment is not always apparent, but determining fit, however, it is also very important that not only the undergarment once ensure that it really does fit you comfortably.

There are many key categories in terms of shape; there is the "standard bra" which is a short bra, and the "long-line bra" (bustier) that extends to the waist and even over the stomach. There are also bras with or without under-wires, with permanent or with removable shoulder straps. In addition, there are bras for certain purposes or uses, such as sports bras, active dressing bras or maternity bras. Bras come in range of cup sizes, which include the full cup that wraps the entire bust. The 3/4 cup that shows some cleavage, and the half cup that shows the top half of the cleavage.

By mixing different combinations of the shaping performance, functionality, cup shape, design, and fabric of the bra, the bra will yield a variety of performances.

Fabric Bras	Lace Bras
This type of bra features smooth outline and seamless cups for an inconspicuous under-clothes appearance and very versatile for many different clothing styles.	This type of bra is especially adorned with delicate lace that heightens one's femininity.

WB-3440		Full Cup Offers full coverage and provides better stability as its firm base with its back and side panels. Provides moderate lift and gentle support.	WB-4624
WB-7304		3/4 Cup Gently lifts the breasts and shows some cleavage. The deep front center cup is perfect for the art of wearing v-type.	WB-4304
WB-3010		1/2 Cup This bra is elegant and versatile, suitable for any occasion or outfit. This bra has adjustable straps, which can be worn as a strapless bra, halter, or even without straps.	CB-1010
WB-8711		Non-wired Simple yet elegant, lace panel for a comfortable fit.	WB-3201
WB-1303		Long-line Long line extends to the waistline, and is one of a popular style for fashion dresses. Provides a natural lift without the front hook to wear.	CB-1310

How to be physically fit

by Ma. Aldegunde Arenas - de Leon

Eye-popping, self-confidence can be as easy as ABC. The key is to be physically fit. All it takes is discipline and unwavering step will follow. Just follow these 7 basic guidelines and you're a step closer to a more confident you.

- **Drink plenty of water** - It's a universal fact that water is the best, cheapest, and the most natural beauty agent. Water flushes out all our body toxins. It makes us feel refreshed and ready to start the day.
- **Watching your food intake** - Don't go for crash diets. Go for food substitutes. Imagine you were served a platter of fried pork Chops and a cup of calorized rice. Why not grill the food into two. Slices it with your companion. Include vegetables and fruits like bananas, a glass low-fat milk or even meals. Eat that rich foods, they build body.
- **Taking vitamin supplements** - It doesn't hurt to shell out a little for vitamin supplements. This way, you're sure to get the essential nutrients that your body needs. Women are more likely to benefit from Vitamin E (beauty vitamin), Vitamin C (for the immune system). Calcium (for the bones) and vegetable supplements.
- **Exercise regularly** - You need not go to the gym for a regular work out to banish those unwanted bulges. Try this trick. Do everything fast! Of course, shedding at the gym or choosing a sport for a hobby would be a big help. But if you are too busy for that, running daily activities would be enough!
- **Importance of relaxation and sleep** - It's all about time management. Make it a habit to get 8 hours of sleep. It is also valuable to pamper yourself like going to the salon. Another form of relaxation is proper breathing. Just inhale and exhale deeply for ten times and you will feel a lot better.
- **Observe correct posture** - Right posture is important. It gives you what we call, the natural poise. Wearing the proper underwear like Wacoal which follows the standard measurement, helps to maintain a good posture and results excellent fit. If you were wearing a bra that doesn't fit your actual bust size, you would feel uncomfortable. Sometimes, you'll have a tendency to slouch. Worse, you unload to the bra that, when you're wearing.

How the right attitude - Having the right attitude is, in reverse, very important. Be realistic. Aim for something, but not an impossible. Have empathy mind and be disciplined. A virtuous in the mind, if you want to be physically fit, set your mind and you're in. Cheer up! It's never too late for fresh beginnings.

CUSTOMER SERVICE HOTLINE: Tel No. 404-1041 • Email: philcs@wacoal.ph.jp

NO RHYME OR REASON. Jasmine Cariño's

EMIC, a rarity accomplished

CLAIRE Jaramillo's "cantilevered" bustier

FRIYOS without bustle by Richard Papa

PROBLEMS IN PROPORTION. Alonzo Aguinaldo (left) and Eric de los Santos

The ego has landed on Fashion Week

From page C1

gether, resulting in a chaotic visual mess. Major headbands on the gowns competed with overpowered ruffled bolero, four-tier socks and high tall-in boots. Nothing a pruned editing can't fix, perhaps?

Viktor Appel, meanwhile, was where Edgar Allan succeeded, with his pink-white-black gowns. While each piece was accented with big black paillettes, One black bustier piece had a giant pouf pink skirt and white satin overlay that extended into a train. An other variation was a white cotton number with ball-accented tulle wrapped around the waist. If anything, the collection seemed to sit well with the audience.

Jasmine Cariño's patently indulgent designs included a beekeeper dress, a sculptured mermaid top and a shapely dress circular jacket-skirt-capelet mix-exploding to out of place on gala night.

The other lesser-known designers showed promising collections, albeit with some noticeable construction hitches—pucker-ing, hemming zippers, poorly-emitted cord-tassel, fine business. Orchapé Ebro can put in much work on the execution as they do on the design—and can open solo—then there is very hope for Philippine fashion to move forward.

GENER Gacusan's go-go girl

EDGAR Allan wins in control.

LIFESTYLE

A. MAKE sure every garment is buttoned, zipped, belted and folded along its natural creases before packing. Then, place them in the case, alternating from side to side. Note that the waistband or collar should be lined up with the edges.

Practical packing tips

APPLES' PICKINGS

Agnes Abeto-Sudbeam

IT'S SUMMER time once again, and most of you are probably planning your family trips or mini-breaks. A variety of Chem Clime to "Mallorca Lampoon's" disaster to-school movies are flashing through your minds, color charts and lists are in hand. There are ways to achieve a stress-free and successful vacation. One such way is by packing properly and remembering what all your essentials plus a little extra are effective.

DCs (observer compulsives) know that the first thing to do is to make a list, so whip out your pad and start making notes. Determine your destination, your purpose for traveling (business versus you need a rest while there) and then decide you should pack a flimsy little number, the warmth or forgotten, for a cool climate and white tanks for a tropical paradise), and your length of stay.

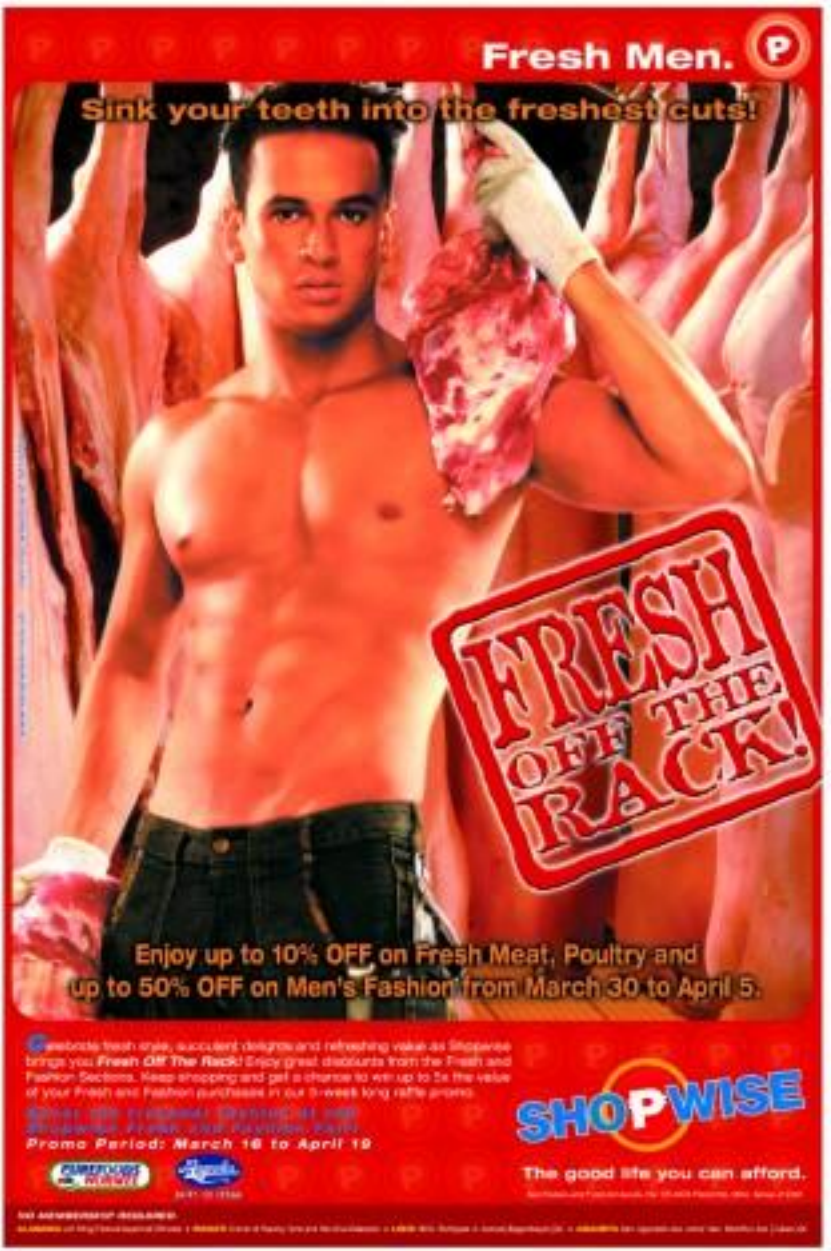
At least a week or two before your trip, make a checklist of all the things to do/bring (my will need and make sure they are all done and in right shape).

It's also a must to take your activities into account. If you're going to the beach, then you have to pack a swimsuit, sun-screen, slippers and other suntoning. If you're planning to go to a ski resort, nothing is to spend time with your fiancé to being comfy sneakers or loafers and a foldable one, birdie. This, it's always a good idea to pack at least one decent outfit and shoes for nights out. It's really quite simple once you've determined certain details.

To make things even easier, here are some practical packing tips from the TravelClub:

1. Pack clothes in the order you plan to wear them. For example, pajamas on top, followed by clothes for the next day, and so on.

2. Save time and help prevent wrinkles by packing your



B. FOLD all the extension tab hanging over the sides. Fold one garment over the other, smoothening wrinkles as you go. The advantage of this method is that each item will cushion the other, helping to prevent creases.

Practical packing tips

Turn to page C2

hanging clothes on the hangers they were on and scrunching them with plastic from the dry cleaner.

3. If traveling with the family, mix family members' clothes in each suitcase. In case one bag gets lost, everyone will still have a change of clothes.

4. If traveling with your spouse or family, pack toiletries together to avoid duplication. I've packs only one tube of toothpaste, one can of shaving cream, one bottle of shampoo, etc.

5. If traveling with small children, put their stuffed object, blanket, socks, underwear) in resealable bags, one for each day. This way, the can be self-search and you avoid any arguments about what to wear.

6. Pack a plastic bag to serve as a laundry bag. Or select a suitcase that includes a "wet pack" for soiled or wet items.

7. Carry small items such as cotton swabs, tissues, aspirin, emery boards and nail polish in resealable plastic bags.

C. PACK shoes along the hinged sides of the bag.

Socks, underwear

8. Pack stable items such as socks or underwear into shoes to help shoes retain their shape. Never bring shoes you have not yet worn or broken in. And whenever possible, select only one pair of shoes to coordinate with all outfits.

9. Spray your favorite perfume or cologne on those paper wad items it in your empty suitcase. When you pack, fold the perfumed papers and clothes together. Clothes will smell good and you need not bring your bottle of perfume.

10. Valuables and important documents including money, passports, rings, jewelry, keys, medications and contacts should be on board with you.

11. Let your itinerary on a tag attached to your carry on. You only have to glance at it to confirm what time, flight and seat assignment you have, instead of constantly digging out your ticket.

12. Tape a list of what you usually pack in the inside of your suitcase. This serves as a packing checklist and also describes your possessions, if the bag is lost and later found. Affix your calling card to the list, as well, so you have identification inside the suitcase if the luggage tag fall off.

13. Leave suitcases out and open prior to departure and put essentials in, as you finish using them at home.

14. Prepare a "survival kit"—a carry-on bag that contains items like the latest bestseller or magazine, toys or sandwiches for the kids, bottled water, chocolate, cookies or chips, headache medication.

15. Try "unstuffing," a method where you fold one garment over the other, smoothing wrinkles as you go. Simply follow the simple steps pictured here.

Source: The Travel Club Travel Tips and Books. Travel Club sells first and only travel shop in the Philippines, carries a wide variety of luggage and travel essentials, including the following brands: Hartmann, Cartier, Samsonite, World Traveler, etc. Timberland, Swissgear and Lowepro.

Email the author at spaulo@philstar.com

D. ROLL T-shirts, undergarments, sleepwear, socks and trousers and fit them in any available space to help keep garments from clothing.

E. PUT in toiletries last so they stay beyond all eight before you leave. Insert your bits or resealable bags in any available spaces, preferably in between clothing to avoid any breakage.

Italian language course

Tel. (+63 2) 8727192, Italian Association (Via Sotto a Riviera) Italian language course beginning April 5, every Tuesday and Thursday, 2–4 p.m. The tuition held at the PIA, mezzanine, 25, Jade Bldg., Salcedo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati. Call (+63 2) 8727192.

SEMINARS. CEU Continental Technology is offering the following seminars: Time Management (April 7, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.); Handling Power and Pressure at Work (April 5, 1–5 p.m.); Effective Supervisory Skills (May 3, Demographic Unit, Developing Excellent Business Communication Skills (May 4, Corporate City), Conference Center Bel Rocks, Alba 1, Plaza Mexico cor. Ayala Ave., Dasmariñas City). Call (02) 892-2300, (02) 556-0-11 or (02) 624-0405.

BOOK LAUNCH. The second edition of the book Bible "Exploring the Powers of Your Inner Mind" testimony talent T.J. Cuenco will be launched on April 8 at 6 p.m. at Power Books, Ltd., Greenhill 4, Ayala Center, Makati and on April 11, 5 p.m. at Mega Mall, 12, Mandaluyong, 400-5489.

CLASSIC by day, sexbomb at night. Going from the office to night is no trouble at all for a woman wearing a skin-thick top with lace overlay, ribbon detail and ruffled hem, and pairing it with a principled pencil skirt and matching jacket.

TOP brass. This classic black three-piece suit exudes equal amounts of authority and flair.

SERIOUS business gets a chic twist with the abstract hem of this sheath, worn here with strappy sandals. Black blazer adds the power touch.

All suited up

ON TOP of her game. For those who wish to wear something other than the usual suspects, this brown zip-up dress with matching wide lace-belt is an exciting but still office-appropriate option.

MOVING up the ladder. This slim cut of this three-piece suit makes the charcoal-gray of the socks anything but dull.

Text by Glen Ivy Chi
Contributor
Photos by Jon Gaston Pamadon

THE POWER suit is back!

Instead of mannish jackets with boat-sized shoulder pads, however, today's corporate fashion is all about sleek suits with classic lines that mean business by day and sophisticated fun by night.

Think Ian Melissa Griffith in "Working Girl" and more Michelle Hobbes in the boardroom, or even Charlotte Sieh at the art gallery. With women becoming more vital players in the workplace, today it's high time that they look and dress the part. For this, a suitably professional outfit is key.

"For quite some time, people have become too casual in their office attire," humbles designer Bobby Hermosa Lacuesta. "Now just wear a blazer and their jeans and then go to work."

Now, with his latest line of suits for humbles, the fashion-based human the key-of-the-line corporate outfit. Hermosa is out to help more women—as well as men—look more authoritative, capable, competent and, well, suitable, for their jobs.

"Suits are definitely coming back," he says, "and what is good about the clothes in humbles is that people can pair the styles they want without looking too different or inappropriate for work."

Indeed, with everyone aware of reminding the less usual pitfalls in corporate dressing—namely, looking boring and looking unprofessional—where did offer offshoots such options, made to suit the Filipina's demands to conform with office dress codes yet stand out at the same time. In just what kind of working professionals need.

"The most important thing is a good fit," says Hermosa, and with suits sporting details, such as an asymmetrically slim hem that is of the same material and color as the jacket, or a strappy inner blouse with ruched waist, to one—from bright-eyed secretaries to decision-making executives—will ever need to worry about looking too frumpy and shapeless at the office.

Paired with very attractive price tag ("The most expensive suits are only around P2,000," says Hermosa), wearing a humbles suit is the easiest way to show you mean business.

Bobby Hermosa's latest line of suits are available at all humbles outlets: Greenhills, 3/F North Edsa, G/F SM Megamall, 4 G/F and Department Store, SM Mall of Asia, SM Megamall, 4/F Pasay, SM Southmall, 2/F Baguio, SM Bicutan Department Store and Greenhills Shopping Center.

HAIR, MAKE-UP & STYLING
GRACE HALILI
SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE BLUE LAGOON CLUB IN ST. FRANCIS COURT

BLACK spaghetti-strap beaded mesh top (P1,345.50); pink crocheted cardigan (P1,235); and dark-blue low-waist denim jeans (P995)

Sorbet-colored summer

YELLOW halter embroidered knit top (P1,650); Vivi 2 dark-blue twill mini (P445); stone necklace (P995); khaki wooden headstrap belt (P395); and blue-green bandanna (P395)

AQUA suede jacket (P1,395); black-and-white floral skirt with tulle (P1,895); stone necklace (P995); and seashell belt (P395)

Text by Claudia V Floral
Photos by Chito Nuñez

NOTHING quenches the thirst of a parched wardrobe than summer pieces that seem like they were picked especially for a fruit-salad bowl. A lime-green cami here or a pair of watermelon-red shorts there will perk up existing wish-eyed basics from seasons past.

Vilarrosa has consistently been drumming out refutable duties for the modern woman for 10 years, and this summer wear is no exception. Resa Co, owner and designer, says creating melon-colored pieces in the post-sun dehydrating in the stocks hardly moved. With her new collection, a season she's optimistic this is no longer the case.

Vilarrosa has four looks for summer: Sirfari, Bohemian, Career and Capri.

Safari mixtures of wood and stone elements that appear in buttons and accessories. There's the ubiquitous safari jacket, but in linen gauze, not the wood khaki. Boho-chic consists of beaded tops, while our picnic looks get quirky with tulle-accented floral skirts and jackets in vivid colors.

Athletic pieces appear in logo-print tees, and may be paired with twill shorts and mesh from Vilarrosa's new line for Shopwise called Vive 2.

Catching fresh rays this date-hunting season is not a monopoly of 30-true women alone, and Co knows that. Most of Vilarrosa's pieces have stocks of up to Size 36—a tall glass of cool fruit shake more or plus-size women can down.

JEWEL-BEADED sequin knit top (P995.95); black asymmetrical twist skirt (P595.50); and printed sleeveless top (P595 each)

KIWI-GREEN suede trench coat (P 1,495); printed blue tie-neck tube mesh top (P 11.50); khaki twill mini (P795); and stone necklace (P995)